Singing over the Bones:

A narrative inquiry into the construction of research and practice cultures and professional identities by counsellor educators at the University of Bristol and within the UK

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Abstract.

Initial conversations amongst a small group of counsellor educators generated an eerie and intriguing silence about the concept of 'research'. A narrative inquiry was constructed, making use of a bricolage of means of gathering narratives, including both research and therapeutic practices and time-honoured and more innovative research traditions.

The primary focus of the study was an exploration of the construction of 'research' and 'practice' cultures and of researcher, practitioner and other professional identity claims, amongst counsellor educators within both the University of Bristol and, to a lesser extent, the UK. A substantive subtext also emerged about the ways in which poststructuralist/feminist ideas and narrative therapy practices were shifting the epistemological ground from beneath the author, who was positioned very differently by the end of the project.

A survey of humanistic/integrative counsellor educators throughout the UK provided contextualizing information in which to embed the more local narratives from Bristol. This survey generated various stories about how counsellor educators constructed their cultural and working practices, and cultural and professional identities, as researchers, writers, educators and/or practitioners.

A series of conversations between the author and her colleagues within the counsellor education programmes at Bristol were recorded. Particularly fluent episodes from these conversations were transcribed and re-presented within a 'layered account' that explored some of the possible dominant/habitual, personal/local and alternative/emerging stories that were being constructed. The resulting text created a blurring of genres between 'therapeutic' and 're-search' practices. There was no attempt to reconcile the different paradigms that generated aspects of this study, or the divergent and rich descriptions that emerged, but rather, they were placed side by side, in relation to and in conversation with each other, within a multilayered, multistoried account. A discussion ensued about

the ways this study might contribute to conversations about research, practice, professional culture and identity and about future considerations and possible actions both at the University of Bristol and within the discourses of the academy, counsellor education and counselling and re-search practices.

Keywords: Professional/cultural identity, counselling research /practice/counsellor education, poststructuralist/ pluralistic / **narrative** inquiry, writing/transcribing/re-presentation.

In memory of my mother,

Audrey Speedy.

Acknowledgements.

I would like to thank my supervisor Phyllida Parsloe, for her companionship, scholarship, wit and zest for life throughout this endeavour. I shall miss our meetings enormously.

I should also like to mention all the friends and colleagues who have supported me and given me opportunities to explore my ideas throughout the time I have been engaged with this project. I would particularly like to thank Hazel Johns for her tenacious and loving support, even when I had lost the plot, and the 'oz-2000' online narrative community, who have become such a vital part of my life.

Special thanks go to my family: to Esther Speedy whose interruptions to this process have been so frequent and have always been so welcome and to Sarah Hall who has so often put all her own plans aside to look after 'everything', while I disappeared into 'the cave'. They have both tolerated myriad disruptions to our family life with goodwill and have sustained and cared for me, in different ways, throughout this process.

My greatest debt is to my fifteen colleagues from the University of Bristol who were so generous with the 'poetics of their experience' and were such wholehearted participants in this study.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol. This dissertation has not been presented to any other university for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas

Signed: Jamie Speedy Date: 31/05/2022

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Glossary of terms and acronyms used and transcription and referencing conventions

Terms Used:

British Association for Counselling	BAC
British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy	BACP
United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy	UKCP
British Psychological Society	BPS
Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal	CPJ
Counselling and Psychotherapy Research (a quarterly international journal)	CPR
Standing Conference for the Advancement of Training and Supervision	SCATS
University Funding Council	UFC
Higher Education Funding Council Of England	HEFCE
Research Assessment Exercise	RAE
Continuing Education Coordination of Administration and Statistics (University of Bristol)	CECAS
Interpersonal Process Recall	IPR
Association for Counselling at Work	ACW
Economic and Social Research Council	ESRC

Referencing conventions used throughout the text:

Italic typeface is used for frontispieces and quotations from poetry and 'live' conversation.	*'Eaten all the others'*
Indented Standard typeface is used for substantial quotations from other texts	'It seems two somewhat..'

Transcription Conventions Used in part three only:

Italic typeface indicates stressed intonation	It's the *last* time
Bold typeface indicates increased loudness	I **hate** mornings
Upper case indicates shouting / bold uppercase very loud shouting	Oh no, NO, **NO**

Prologue.

'Among my people, questions are often answered with stories. The first story almost always evokes another, which summons another, until the answer to the question has become several stories long. A sequence of tales is thought to offer broader and deeper insight than a single story alone'

(Clarissa Pinkola Estes, 1992, p1, The Gift of Story).

The lived experience of humans has often been described as a 'storied' experience (Bruner 1986, Sarbin, 1986, White & Epston 1990, Frank, 1995, McLeod 1997, Speedy, 2000). I spend my working life listening to and for, a multiplicity of stories.

This particular study has evolved as a series of interlocking stories, told by different aspects or identities of the author, as well as by the research participants. This has felt, initially, slightly counter-cultural to the atmosphere of the institution in which I work, and also not quite 'proper' research. Many of my colleagues quoted later in this text have also used the terms 'proper research' to distinguish between themselves and 'bona fide' university researchers. McLeod (1997) echoes some of these sentiments:

> 'Many people, certainly those who control what takes place in the professions, have passed through an educational system that places little value on stories. I gradually learned that stories are necessary. As so often happens, it was a client who taught me this…' (pp ix-x)

In my teaching I have often told the story of 'la Loba' the wolf woman, to introduce and, to a certain extent, describe the process of counselling research. I first came across this story in the work of Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) although there are many versions. I have adapted it, over the years, for my own purposes as a counsellor trainer. It is a story that resonates very much with my understanding of the process of research. It positions the wolf woman or researcher as someone familiar with and part of the local, cultural practices and also as someone set slightly apart. The 'researcher' in this case is female, an old crone, engaged in arcane, foolhardy and possibly magical

pursuits. The wolf woman's relationship with her community parallels my own relationship with the academy. She exists alongside her community, is even a contributor to it, but is set apart. She is not quite certain that she is 'of' it.

It is my own version of the story that I have used to introduce each part of this study, and to identify and name the central stories that I would like to tell. La Loba, the wolf woman has become the warp of this tapestry of stories: the structural framework that runs the length of the study and holds the weft, each section loosely in place. Methodological, ethical and research conversations zigzag their way throughout the study, intertwined with cultural conversations (about counselling, about the professions about academia, about research and about practice). A rich seam of 'live' data runs through the study, from the initial conversations in Part One, through the contextualizing information gathered in Part Two, to the personal and professional stories captured in part three.

The story of La Loba is 'only a story', yet once I found the story metaphors for counselling research, I looked towards the 'poetic permissions' in research methodology (Mair 1989, Riessman, 1993, Richardson 1993, 1994) of which, more later. I also came to a different understanding of research practices. It occurred to me that *I might find a way of becoming a researcher that others, and I, might be able to construct as an addition to and invitation towards, rather than a rejection of practitioner identities.*

In telling stories from different traditions and perspectives, I was overtly inviting readers to find their own meanings, to alter the text with their gaze, and to do so myself.

Having determined upon a fictional narrator, I somehow felt able to develop more multi-storied perspectives on the same material. The wolf woman told an overarching story, to sing over the bones, and give the project a 'fictional' framework. Once she had established her position and authority I experienced a much greater sense of creative and intellectual freedom and was able to express a range of other voices. This became a piece of conversational research (see: Josselson et al, 1997 and Chapter Three of this text). Sometimes these were socio-cultural conversations about research and practice; sometimes the conversations were between different, arguably irreconcilable and incompatible aspects of this research and its design (see: Brannen, 1992, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, McLeod, 1994 p176-183, 2001, p119-129, Josselson, et al 1997, Crawford & Kimmel, 1999) embodied in my own different voices. At other times the conversations were between the other research participants and myself.

The wolf woman introduces each part of this study. The 'scholar', 'researcher' and 'writer' provide different voices and are allocated different moments of privilege throughout the study. There are also a range of research participant's voices, starting in Part One with voices from the initial conversations, contributed to in Part Two by the voices from a nationwide survey of counsellor educators, and concluded in Part Three with an in-depth exploration of voices of my colleagues at the University of Bristol.

Stories are not usually linear: they are, more traditionally, fragmented and/or circular (Metzger, 1986, Zipes 1988). Stories, or rather narratives, (some loose definitions follow in Chapter One) may be constructed as fact or fiction, this distinction being less significant than the structure, context, and process of the storytelling (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, Gerrig, 1993). They exist in the space between and encompass both oral and written traditions and understandings, which is their fundamental significance for me as a practitioner, educator and researcher in the 'talking therapies'. Counselling is a predominantly oral tradition, yet as researchers we are limited to representing our discoveries in written, or at least, two-dimensional form (McLeod, 1997). I have some sense that, in attending to what Geertz (1973a) describes as 'thick description' and to the work of narrative therapists (White & Epston, 1990, Monk, et al, 1997, Payne, 2000) and narrative researchers (Mischler, 1986, Reissman 1993, Josselson, et al. 1995, Frank, 1995, Berger, 1997) we might, as a discipline, move some way towards making this translation:

> 'Translation here is not a simple recasting of other's ways of putting things in terms of our ways of putting them (that is the kind where things get lost) but displaying the logic of their ways of putting them in the locution of ours; a conception which again brings it rather closer to what a critic does to illumine a poem than what an astronomer does to account for a star' (Geertz, 1983, p10).

The notion of a 'research/practice gap' in counselling was to become the central focus of this investigation, as becomes apparent in the main body of this text. My investigations into the construction of this gap and into the events and discourses that shaped the gap, found themselves situated alongside the gap between oral and written languages and professional and cultural traditions. Some of these traditions, as McLeod (1997c) asserts, are more privileged than others: -

> 'The critical tension that exists in the relationship between counsellors and therapists and the professional literature is the division between spoken, oral communication and writing. [...] Therapy practice is to an overwhelming extent an oral activity. However, we live in a culture in which the written word is privileged, has authority. (p.163)'

Heather, one of the central participants in this study, gave an insight into much of the territory, and her own longing and reluctance to map it, when she said of her work as a tutor on a post-graduate diploma in counselling: -

'The inclusion of the case study has really made sense of the whole core theoretical model for the student [...] it is the story of the whole course. [....] I loved designing and teaching it but, well, writing it down, you kind of distil the learning in one way, but lose the interaction in another. If only I could write it as operas, ballets, or fairy stories' (Heather, November 1997).

Perhaps she could. Perhaps she should!

Chapter one: Introduction

As I begin to write up this study, I am aware that much of what I have to say rests on the 'shoulders of those who went before me' (Clarkson and Gilbert, 1991). I am particularly aware of the shoulders of the 'first generation' of counselling educators and trainers in Britain, many of whom I know, and to whom I am known. These people, mostly women, were practitioner pioneers, rather than researchers or academics (Speedy, 1993, 1998). I am daunted and thrilled by the relatively 'unresearched' newness of the field in which I work and of the uncharted territory in front of me.

I am also writing looking straight into the eyes of those who come after me. These are the eyes of the master's students in counselling that I currently teach and the doctoral students that I am about to. Students embarking upon research projects at a time of galloping growth in method and practice can end up plunging headlong into some very muddy waters. This study represents my own venture into some of those waters and is something of an account of how my own ideas and practices changed over time as I wrestled with issues of congruence and legitimation. The study starts to some degree as an interrogation and critique of dominant research and therapy practices and moves towards a more clearly delineated post-structuralist position. These waters remain choppy and uncertain, but I hope not to have muddied them further in charting my own progress across them.

As I set out, I can hear phrases from Heaney's (1991) poem, 'The Schoolbag' roaming around in my head:

'My handsewn leather schoolbag. Forty years.
Poet, you were nel mezzo del cammin
When I shouldered it, half full of blue-lined jotters,
And saw the classroom charts, the displayed bean,

The wallmap with its spray of shipping lanes
Describing arcs across the blue North Channel...
And in the middle of the road to school,
Ox-eye daisies and wild dandelions.

Learning's easy carried! The bag is light,

Scuffed and supple and unemptiable

As an itinerant school conjuror's hat.

So take it, for a word hoard and a handsel,

As you step out trig and look back all at once

like a child on his first morning leaving parents (Seamus Heaney, 1991)'

Strands of this study stretch out across counselling training in Britain and make comparisons with our North American colleagues. These threads link up with a broad range of literature from interconnecting fields, rather like the contents of 'an itinerant school conjuror's hat.' At the same time the central investigation is being conducted within and amongst my intimate and every day workgroup, creating a complex web amongst friends, colleagues, managers, co-trainers, training supervisors, former students and former tutors.

Implicit in this method is a conviction that attention to particular knowledge, embedded in context, will evoke both a sense of counselling as research and counselling research as a social process. In the same way that counselling practice needs to be seen not only as a particular and intimate helping relationship but as a product of its social times and cultural 'projects' (Giddens, 1991, Cushman 1995, McLeod, 1999a).

I work as a counsellor educator in an established group, which delivers a large programme of courses at the University of Bristol. I have a sense of responsibility about the pivotal 'gatekeeper' role that trainers and educators have within the establishment of any new profession (Connor, 1994, Dryden, 1994, Dryden, et al., 2000). I am aware of the enormous influence that my own trainers had on my subsequent professional development and of the impact of trainers, as a group, on the development of counselling as a profession (Speedy, 1993,1998b, Connor, op.cit., Johns, 1996).

The emerging counselling profession has been keen to establish an adjacent counselling research industry (Hicks and Wheeler, 1994, Baron, 1997, Dryden, et al., 2000, Nelson-Jones, 2001, McLeod, 2001, 2001a). This research activity, like counselling itself, has many purposes and stakeholders. It is ostensibly a discovery enterprise, a search for evidence but is equally described as a significant cultural component in the quest for professional status.

My early conversations (outlined in Part One) led me towards an exploration of the socio-cultural construction of research and practice and of researcher and practitioner identities amongst the group of counsellor trainers and educators with whom I work. These initial conversations had also made me curious about the wider context of counsellor education and training in Britain. I wanted to know if these constructs were of only local significance, were intrinsic to the 'counselling culture' that had rapidly developed in Britain over the preceding three decades (Hooper, 1997) or were an old familiar story within the genealogy of counselling (Rogers, 1978).

The focus of the study became an intimate, qualitative analysis of the experiences, expressions, images and stories about 'counselling research and practice' expressed by the fifteen people who work, alongside myself, as counselling educators and trainers at post-graduate level in the University of Bristol's Counselling programme. A survey of similar colleagues in other British institutions was also conducted as background information (see appendix two).

This was then, primarily, an investigation into the construction of the endeavours and cultures of research and practice in the counselling field in the U.K. and at the University of Bristol in particular. In order to carry out this exploration, however, a further investigation into ways of congruently and legitimately researching these issues emerged.

This study aims to question and problematise constructs of research and practice within the counselling field, to trouble the edges of the separate identity claims made by writers, researchers and practitioners, to take up methodological positions that blur the genres of academic and creative writing and therapeutic and research practices, to 'transgress' the discourses of empirical research, to explore the culture, climate and context of counsellor education within a traditional British University and to excavate the dominant, habitual and alternative research stories being told by the counselling programmes staff at the University of Bristol.

A narrative research structure

It is a convention in the writing of Ph.D. theses, although not in the writing of stories, to commence with a critical review of the current literature and thence to progress to an investigation and ensuing findings and conclusions. This gives the whole undertaking a clarity and structure, but also a rather inert and well-ordered appearance that belies, I suspect, the rich muddle in the middle of most of the process. My own experience has been cyclical, rather than linear, more akin to Bruner's (1975) concept of a 'spiral curriculum'.

The narrative structure to this study has both allowed for a gradual unfolding of successive events ideas and practices over time and has also allowed me to abandon a strictly linear sequencing in favour of a more 'layered account' (Lather, 1997, Ronai, 1998, 1999), that owed as much to works of film and fiction as works of academic literature and of 'fact' (Minh-ha, 1991, Gerrig, 1993):

> 'The work had not been arranged chronologically; those who had owned it, and through whose hands it had passed, had each left their contribution, as writer, scholar, critic, eccentric, collector, and each according to temperament and passion. The book owed nothing to the clock' (Winterson, 1994, p203).

Feminist researchers (Lather, 1991, 1995, Lather and Smithies, 1997, Davies, 2000, 2000a) and ethnographers (Ellis, 1995, Ellis and Bochner, 1996, Richardson, 1991, 1994, 2000) amongst others (Denzin, 1997, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, 2000a,) have encouraged experimentation and transgression in the representation of research texts. This movement has emerged as something of a counterbalance to the monolithic universal, or 'voice of god' certainty that has characterised traditional research studies (see Harraway, 1988 and Lather, 1991). I have resisted a strong urge to experiment with the chronology of this text: an urge to commence with the concluding chapters and 'cut and paste' possible routes back to the beginning. I would, however, like to emphasise the temporary nature of this text in its present form. It has been through numerous other versions and is going through another transformation now as you are reading it. Parts One to Four are set out in the way I have presented them because this format illustrates something of the cumulative development of the ideas, practices and stories that make up the study. I would invite you to read them in any order you choose. Indeed, characteristically, readers of research studies glance at the

title, skim the bibliography to 'situate' the text within a body of work and then begin to read. You may already have done this in which case my invitation to transgress comes too late. If not, this text can be read in any order, although I would recommend that the conversation in Part Four, between all the voices of those who constructed it, is best read first and/or last.

Narrative terminology

In this study I frequently use the terms narrative, story and conversation, which perhaps require some specific definitions. Conversation has been used in three ways, firstly to describe the audiotaped interactions that took place with research participants. These interactions seemed to have more in common with workplace and counselling conversations than with formal, or even unstructured research interviews (Erlandson, et al., 1993, Kvale, 1996). Secondly I have used 'conversation' as an overarching concept to describe my interrogation of certain prevailing discourses: the cultural, social and linguistic domains, constraints, parameters or worlds within which debate, ideas, theories and discussions might take place (Lyotard, 1984, Bruner, 1986, Lyons, 1999). Thus in Part Two, 'the gap between the bones' describes the limits to the socio-cultural domain in which counselling research conversations can take place in Britain today. Thirdly I have used 'conversational' to describe aspects of the design of this study as a conversation between different research paradigms, the one contextualizing the other, and between the principle voices engaged in that research: the scholar, researcher, writer and participants.

For my purposes in this study I have tried hard not to use the terms story and narrative interchangeably, although there are many ways in which, as Gerrig (1993, pp1-27) suggests they write themselves, loosely, in overlapping ways. These words seem to jump into different positions in the text in the more literary context of Part Three than in the more academic contexts of Parts One and Two. I have however, wherever possible, used Frank's (1995) overarching definition of narrative as any chronological text, albeit a painting, a photograph, a piece of writing or a conversation. This definition is corroborated by Webster's dictionary, which describes narrative as 'a discourse or an example of it, designed to represent a connected succession of happenings' (1966, p1503). Narrative has also emerged as a term defining particular practices of research and therapy and has been used in that connection within this study.

I have also used Frank's (1995) definition of 'story' as being a narrative, not necessarily told chronologically, but containing such a chronicle and told in a particular 'voice', with an audience in mind:

> 'Storytelling is for another just as much as it is for oneself. In the reciprocity that is storytelling, the storyteller offers herself as guide to the other's self-formation. The other's receipt of that guidance not only recognises, but values the teller. The moral genius of storytelling is that each, teller and listener, enters the space of the story for the other (p18).

I have used this term to describe such 'chronicles', large and small, and also to delineate between different narrative domains, such as between dominant/habitual, local/personal and alternative/emergent stories constructed within the texts of conversations presented in Part Three.

The story of this research

This study is a narrative that includes a multiplicity of stories. The study has been written as a narrative to make a point. This introduction, for example, although appearing at the beginning, has been rewritten many times and was in strictly chronological terms, one of the last segments, or episodes to be written. This beginning had to wait until the end in order to introduce, describe and make sense of the muddle in the middle. Each section of the study is completed by a fictionalised account from the wolf-woman, acting both as a summary of the preceding chapters and as a reminder of the interface between fact and fiction that is rarely addressed in traditional research texts, but that may actually make research studies more accessible to some practitioners (Campbell, 2000).

Much of the craft of story telling and story writing is about behaving 'as if' (Le Guin, 1998, 83-94). Like much human science research and all action research (see: Hart & Bond, 1995) it is about 'pretending towards' (Mair, 1989, pp14-23). The art of pretending towards an integration of research and practice and the craft of behaving 'as if' this were not only desirable, but also eminently possible, has been fundamental to the design of this study.

The study, in keeping with certain storytelling traditions (Pinkola Estes, 1992), is divided into four parts or 'episodes' in the central story. In Part One, we begin '**in the wolf woman's cave**' with an exploration of the initial conversations that clarified the research topic. In this episode, the fiction

of the wolf woman's quest allows us to examine the piles of bones that are already stacked in the cave before the study commences. We are able to examine critically some of the philosophical and methodological literature of research 'as if' the substantial body of this study had not yet been undertaken. Chapters Two and Three outline some of the ideas and practices that I was wrestling with as this study commenced, particularly issues of culture, agency and reflexivity and the relationship between humanistic and poststructuralist notions of 'self'. It is clear, as these ideas begin to change by Part Three, that this study is describing the development of my ideas over time, through successive events, and is not captured statically, as if in 'frieze frame' for research conveniences. In Part Two we go out '**searching for the bones**'. The wolf-woman has decided on the particular species of wolf she wishes to search for. The focus narrows towards the relationship between research and practice. In this episode the literature of the 'research-practice' gap contextualises the quest. In Part Three '**singing over the bones**' the wolf woman sings her own particular interpretation over the skeleton of her chosen wolf. The methodological conversations extend into the realm of counselling and the use of narrative therapy practices **as** research. A series of interconnecting conversations and follow-up conversations are re-presented. An unintended consequence of this aspect of my study was the transgressing of my own expectations of 'practice enriching research', since my research discoveries were also beginning began to transform my therapeutic practices.

Finally, in Part Four, '**the wolf with the human face**' aspects of this study are brought together in conversation with each other. We are left with thicker and richer descriptions, rather than 'thin conclusions' (Geertz, 1973a,White, 1997, pp15-21) about how people have constructed their identities as counsellor educators and the identities of 'others' as researchers and some of the ways these identities might be reconstructed in the future. Suggestions are made about integrating research, as a fourth dimension, into the counsellor training programmes at Bristol and elsewhere and into the working lives of substantial numbers of the practitioner/teachers employed in universities and other organisations. Questions are asked about the discourses that shape and describe research and practice differently, rather than as different practices of co-research. The concept of a multiplicity of researcher, as well as researched voices is put forward as an integrative research model and as a conversational method congruent with the 'talking therapies'. The

storyteller and the listeners are left wondering how we might construct and end these stories differently, the very next time we tell them.

A succession of research events

These stories began in the summer of 1996 as I set out on an initial exploration and took part in six loosely structured conversations with counsellor trainers. A period of stillness and reflection ensued, following my mother's sudden death, when this study was officially suspended. This period of inaction or creative incubation (see: Moustakas, 1990, pp23-30) was probably the most productive and creative 'listening space' of the whole investigation.

The study developed, gradually, into a 'bricolage' of methods conceived as different aspects or voices in the research conversation (Josselson, et al., 1997). The researcher-as -bricoleur is a term that Denzin and Lincoln have appropriated from Levi-Strauss's (1966) descriptions of the development of myths in popular culture to describe the qualitative researcher who:

> 'Uses the tools of his or her methodological trade, deploying whatever strategies, methods or empirical materials are at hand. If new tools have to be invented or pieced together, then the researcher will do this. The choice of which tools to use, which research practices to employ, is not set in advance' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, p4).

Thus I set out, in the autumn of 1997, to place this study in context by carrying out a survey of integrative counsellor educators in Britain, in order to determine something of the general cultural climate, and pervading attitudes towards counselling research as back ground information (see Appendix Two). Subsequently, during 1998-2001, I conducted a more intimate study with my colleagues in Bristol, engaging with them in a cycle of interdependent conversations, each followed by further conversations and re-tellings.

The conversations were unstructured, although in each of them the purposes were clear and the cumulative knowledge gathered from preceding conversations was made available. The further, follow-up conversations had some basis in the traditions of interpersonal process recall (Elliott, 1986, Kagan, 1984) but were loosely structured and were more in keeping with the traditions of 're-tellings' familiar to narrative therapists (White, 2000). The stimulus of listening to some short extracts from the preceding conversations was more of an 'aide memoire' to retellings of the

original story than an attempt to recall the initial experience at a deeper level. In the second conversation participants had an opportunity to re-member and re-call (White, 1997, pp22-93) the specific dynamics of their relationship with the principal researcher, to consider the impact that the first conversation had made on them and to reflect on their experience of being part of this research process.

Analysis of the conversations proved considerably more complex. I had originally intended to use some form of what has become known as 'constructivist' grounded theory (Charmaz, 1995, 2000) to analyse the text. It was at this stage of immersion in the data (1999/2000) that both research and researcher were to undergo another major transformation. Eventually I did feel able to analyse aspects of the conversations, but only after wrestling with some major ethical dilemmas.

I had two main areas of concern. Firstly, in 'interrupting' the flow of the individual conversations, I seemed to be chopping them up into sound bites that fitted neatly into my own particular 'theme park' of categories. Each conversation contained at least one 'episode' of uninterrupted story, which begged to be left whole. I was faced with some difficult questions about the congruence and internal consistency for counselling researchers in using this form of analysis. These were questions that had already been asked by other grounded theorists (Rennie, 1992, O'Callaghan, 1998) and were also being asked by narrative analysts (Mischler, 1986, Gee, 1986, 1991, Reissman, 1993, 1994, Frank, 1995, McLeod & Balamoutsou, 1996) and life story and feminist researchers (Josselson, et al., 1996, 1997, 1999, Lather, 1997). Secondly, by representing the conversations in standard written form I was 'mistranslating' texts from an oral tradition that had a rich layering of prosodic (non-verbal) and poetic features. I felt as if was distorting and diminishing the richness of the 'live' interaction and discovered that discourse analysts, developmental linguists and other human science researchers had also wrestled with these issues to good effect (Ochs, 1979, McLeod & Balamoutsou, 1996, 2001, Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999).

As I immersed myself in the text and the dilemmas that transcription presented, I experienced a stronger and stronger sense of incongruence between my narrative research practices, participative style of inquiry and the ensuing data analysis and presentation. The most powerful stories that were emerging from the texts were not those overtly generated by the context of the interview or

the 'interventions' of the interviewer, (see: Atkinson & Silverman, 1997) but rather, they were the stories that the participants spontaneously wanted to tell.

The more I listened to the tapes, the more a group of unique stories, or poems, that were developed over several 'episodes' within the initial conversations and retellings, sang out. Eventually, I presented, in stanza form, the core texts that seemed to capture and distil the essence of my original conversations. These stories are supported with extracts from the other conversations, insofar as time and space allows. These stories, together with retellings from research participants and myself are represented in Part Three of the study.

Situating this study.

The counselling programme at the University of Bristol, in tandem with the profession of counselling in Britain, was coming of age. Alongside the demand for recognition and status that professionalisation incurs (Baron, 1997, Dryden, et al., 2000) there comes the corresponding requirement for regulations and standards (Bond 1992, Bond & Shea, 1997, Browne, 2001) and the 'sugar in the diet' (Proctor 1991) of qualifications. The qualifying currency of counselling, as little as ten years ago, included a loose 'barefoot' amalgamation of trainings, personal therapy and experience. At the beginning of the 21st century, initial counsellor training has been considerably standardised as a result of the British Association of Counselling's (BAC) course accreditation procedures (BAC, 1988, 1996) and the impact of later parallel developments in the worlds of psychotherapy, instigated by the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP, 1997) and counselling psychology, developed by the counselling psychology division of the British Psychological Society (BPS,1993).

In line with these developments, the University of Bristol's counselling programme has developed a wide range of open studies courses and access routes. It has also established a large postgraduate professional training and master's degree programme and has plans for a taught doctoral programme As this study progressed and informed our teaching and researching practices, our reputation as innovative and creative research trainers continued to grow (Speedy and Etherington, 1999, Speedy, 1999). The 'next step' in the development of our programme is the establishment of Bristol as a centre of excellence in counselling research.

This study constantly refers to counselling as a social, culturally and historically situated project. It would be somewhat ironic if I were not to attempt to situate this investigation, by way of introduction, in its historical 'moment' and professional context.

Professionalisation

One significant backdrop to this study was the hotly disputed domain of professional progress and development. There is an extensive literature of the professions and their comparative development, the most pertinent work being the systemic studies of professions, professional life and associations, and professional education. (Abbott, 1988, Witz, 1992, Watkins, et. al, 1992, 1994, 1996, Taylor, 1997).

There are innumerable definitions of what it means to be a professional, with defining characteristics ranging from altruistic (Bledstein, 1976) to elitist and self-serving (Davies, 1995, Witz, 1995) and from fast-changing open systems or 'communities of practice' creating permanently fluctuating knowledge bases (Watkins, et. al, 1992, 1994, Hoyle & John, 1995, Wenger, 1998, Atkinson & Claxton, 2000) to closed systems seeking to 'engage in occupational imperialism' (Larkin 1983, Saks 1995).

The professional project in counselling is seen both by its critics, who favour inclusivity (Howard, 1996, House & Totton, 1997), those who feel we should tread more lightly and with greater caution in our 'desires for exclusivity' (Fosket, 2000, p 87) and its advocates alike (Baron, 1996, 1997, Bond & Shea, 1997, Wheeler, 1999, Barden, 2000) as a claiming of higher ground.

The pros and cons of professionalisation are hotly contested. Counselling is, on the one hand, a developing practice that wants to assert itself within the professional problems jurisdiction at the very least *alongside* psychotherapy and counselling psychology (hence the move during the course of this study from British Association of Counselling (BAC) to the more inclusive British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)[1]. In order to maintain such a position, according to BAC/BACP sources, counselling would need to be: research-based (Mcleod, 1994a, 2001b, Hicks & Wheeler, 1994, Dinesen & Goss, 2001, Nelson-Jones, 2001), regulated (McDevitt,

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[1] BAC became BACP in 2000, following unsuccessful parliamentary action to licence only a rival grouping (registered psychotherapists) (see: McDevitt, 2000)

2000, Browne, 2001), entrepreneurial (Carroll, 1999, Butler, 1999, Bell, 2000), and identifiable. According to Barden (2000):

'identifying counselling as a profession is about acknowledging that counselling and the use of counselling skills is an organised, thoughtful, and accountable activity'(p3).

On the other hand critics within the counselling domain question the pursuit of professionalisation (Howard, 1996, House, 1997) and medical models of registration that seem to benefit practitioners rather than clients (Wasdell, 1992, Mowbray, 1995). Others argue that the effectiveness of professional, rather than 'lay' helpers remains largely unproven (Pilgrim, 1997, pp 137-145). The strong volunteer origins and barefoot traditions peculiar to the history of counselling in the U.K. have perhaps been factors in its continuing 'much greater counter-establishment tendencies' in this respect, (Bond & Shea, 1997, p 522) than with other helping professions, such as nursing or teaching.

Interestingly, both sides of this critical divide envisage the status and security of the classic professions, whereas in reality even those professions may be shifting. It may once have been useful to draw a distinction between the elite, traditional professions that 'belonged to a secretive society which controlled what was legitimate knowledge and who would be permitted to practice it' (Hughes, 1994, p9) and the current more flexible, more blurred, less engendered, less secure world of the 'new' professions 'whose areas of expertise may often overlap with knowledge and skills claimed by other professionals and non-professionals' (ibid).

Certainly the 'newer' professions within university departments, such as teaching, nursing and social work did not, and are unlikely to, attain the professional 'high ground'. The teaching profession, for instance, is already concerned with its own 'crisis of professionalisation' (Hoyle & John, 1995, Furlong, 2000). Professional status for teachers in terms of knowledge, responsibility and autonomy is already an area hotly contested by parents, policy-makers and the media.

Similarly, the debates around professionalisation within the BAC and the desire to promote BAC as an 'organisation that is taking the lead in setting the parameters of a professional activity' (Baron 1996, p 625) have taken place within a context of increasing popularisation and glamorisation of 'the talking cures' on the one hand (Pfister 1997, Hodson, 2000) and media

condemnation of both 'therapism', the culture of counselling, and its lack of regulation on the other (Weldon 1997, 1999):

> 'Anyone can set up in their own front room as a psychotherapist-and the length and structure of their training probably has very little to do with their insight or their ability to influence others, or cheer them up' (Weldon, 1999, p133).

Whatever the changing cultural significance of the term 'professional' or the outcomes of these inter and intra-professional disputes, it seems likely that alongside an estimated 70% of the European workforce, counsellors in Britain are, and will be, making (positive or negative) professional identity claims (Watkins, et al., 1992).

The establishment of professional legitimacy has been seen as a key purpose in the development of counselling research. Indeed the current interest in counselling research is, at least in part, prompted by professionalisation (Hicks & Wheeler, 1994, McLeod 1994, 1994a, 1999, 2001, 2001b, Wheeler, 1999, Barden, 2000).

> 'Like other human service professions such as medicine, nursing, clinical psychology, teaching and social work, there is an expectation that members of the counselling profession will be able to offer a rational basis for their interventions through drawing on a research-based body of knowledge' (McLeod, 1994, p3).

Accountability to stakeholders and fund holders (Mellor-Clark & Shapiro 1995, Rowland & Goss, 2000, Dinesen & Goss, 2001) and benefits to our clients and ourselves (Hicks & Wheeler, 1994, McLeod, 1994, 1999, 2001a, Aveline & Shapiro, 1995, Wheeler, 1999, Barden, 2000, Nelson-Jones, 2001) are also cited as significant grounds for developing a counselling research climate within the U.K. All these calls for an increased research base inevitably lead to some kind of increased involvement with, or scrutiny of the academy, itself a hotly contested site for professional education and training.

Academic cultures and the counselling project

The efficacy of establishing counsellor education in university settings has regularly been questioned by those who execute it (Rogers, 1983, Dryden, 1991, Berry & Woolfe, 1997). The straddling of the two worlds of academia and professional counsellor education has been described as feeling:

> 'Trapped in two shotgun marriages - and neither is consistently productive'
>
> (Johns 1998a, p10).

The tendency for counselling educators and universities to diminish, rather than combine, each others' virtues and values has been ably described by Berry & Woolfe (1997) and Johns (1998a). The speed of expansion in counselling as a profession, and counselling education in British universities has certainly been rapid enough to merit the use of the term 'shotgun'.

I prefer to view the marriage as cross-cultural, rather than shotgun. The intellectual and research culture of universities has much to offer counselling, but equally, the emotional intelligence integral to counselling has much to offer universities and their research cultures. This is, perhaps, an easier task for those of us who are 'second generation' counsellor educators in universities. Those who came before us struggled to establish the culture and identity of counselling within an environment that seemed, at best disinterested and at worst, hostile and undermining. In the recent past, it was:

> 'difficult, at times, not to become overly defensive or unhelpfully attacking: even harder not to encourage hostile negativity in both students and tutors to the institution on which we were dependent for resources-limited and hard won though those were' (Johns, 1998a, p7).

If a research/practice, or more precisely research/education gap exists within our ways of working at the University of Bristol, this gap may be caused by a cultural fear, as practitioners, that a 'research climate' may change the way we work. It would certainly make a difference. At the time this study was being undertaken the counselling programme was undergoing some major organisational changes and was, like many university continuing education programmes in the U.K., becoming part of the mainstream academy (Kingman, 1998, Blackstone, 1998). This was more than a change of venue, but rather, also represented a change of culture. In joining the Graduate School of Education, the counselling programme was stepping into a culture that privileged the role of full-time professional researchers and made the case for a 'research-based culture in teaching' (Furlong, 1998). Indeed, in most traditional universities, the status and promotion prospects go to researchers rather than teachers or practitioners(see: Griffin, pp2-20)

One may assume that the proposed convergence of a fledgling 'professional practitioner culture' with a 'research culture' will expose linguistic/symbolic differences at the very least. It may even breach 'constraining boundaries' and generate both cognitive and emotional dissonance amongst the 'convergence survivors' (Noer, 1993). The effects of this forthcoming convergence are beyond the remit and time boundaries of the current study, but nonetheless taking place as I am writing it up, were shadows and opportunities hanging over the counselling programme as this research was being conducted. It is perhaps inevitable that they both constrained and enabled the writer and participants in this research project. According to Noer (1997):

> 'even in organisations where emotions are considered data it is difficult for most people to be truly open about their survivor feelings' (p7).

It is beyond the scope of this project to review the vast and burgeoning literature of academic life (see: Becher, 1989, Fisher, 1994, Barnett & Griffin, 1997, Tight, 1998, Henkel, 2000, for some of the most recent and most renowned accounts). Perhaps some of the most relevant texts are those discussing the 'engendered' nature of academic environments. This seems pertinent to a cultural union in which women are both prolific and privileged in the context of counselling training, but under-represented in 'masculinist' academic contexts (Acker, 1994, Brooks, 1997). Counsellor education has been described as 'a world turned upside down' dominated by powerful, older women (Speedy, 1993, 1998), whereas: 'Universities, in other words, are like families. Women do most of the work, but men get most of the credit' (Brooks, op. cit., p xi).

These sound like 'interesting times'!

The organisational contexts of the University of Bristol, and of counselling in Britain, as with most 'real world' research studies (Bryman, 1988, Robson, 1993, Czarniawska, 1998), were difficult to hold still. They continued to move, change and grow at what sometimes felt like an alarming pace. In particular, the move towards placing the counselling programme within the Graduate School of Education, rather than the (disappearing) Department for Continuing Education at the University of Bristol meant that at some points the context of this research seemed to be changing daily.

This study became, in part, an attempt to chart and to ease those organisational changes, changes within what Bruner (1990, pp67-97) would describe as 'the landscape of action' (and to give us

the tools to adapt ourselves and our identities to the demands of a different working context (Bruner's , 1990, p99-138, landscape of meaning) and to 'embrace' another story.

The trick will be to 're-author' our own lives and remain within the parameters of sustainable organisational and emotional growth. To quote White: -

'We live by the stories that we have about our lives, these stories actually shape our lives, and embrace our lives' (White, 1995, p14).

Part One - In which the wolf woman lives alone in her cave.

Once upon a time, a long time ago, and also at this very moment, a woman lived alone in her cave. She was slightly apart from, but known by her community, sometimes reviled, sometimes revered. Indeed, everybody knows about her, although few have ever seen her. She exists, in one form or another in the folk stories and mythologies of many cultures. She is known in Mexico as 'La Loba', *the wolf-woman.*

This wolf woman's purpose in life is to be the collector, curator and recorder of the bones and debris discarded, ignored or unknown to the community around her. Some of her collection seems very precious, some of it quite bizarre. It may not be immediately obvious, even to her, why she has collected some of the bones she has in her cave. She, nonetheless, goes on obsessively hoarding, collating and storing all manner of material.

'The sole work of La Loba is the collecting of bones. She is known especially to collect and preserve that which is in danger of being lost to the world. Her cave is filled with the bones of all manner of desert creatures: the deer, the rattlesnake, and the crow. But her speciality is said to be wolves ' (Clarissa Pinkola Estes 1992, p27).

The framework of the study is the story of 'La Loba', whose characteristics I seem to be taking on, as the story unfolds. The relationships between the cyclical nature of mythical time, the linear nature of historical time, and my identities as narrator, practitioner, writer and researcher are all present in this story (Doniger O'Flaherty, 1988, Freeman, 1998), more of whom in part two. The mythological nature of the central character in this text both challenges my search for present-day truths and gives that purpose different permissions. In part one, privileging the voices of the scholar and the researcher, I intend to outline some of the piles of bones lying at the back of my cave, just as this study began. In re-telling these stories I hope to describe the journey that led to the focus of my research, and also to 'contextualize the study in its historical, social and cultural location' (McLeod, 1994, p98).

The piles of bones uncovered were *the barebones of ideas* and *the methodological bones and practices* that were available to this researcher, in her context, at the outset of this study (the shape of these ideas contexts and possibilities shifted substantially over time), *ethical bones*, the codes, guidelines, dilemmas, moralities, pluralities and ethical issues that defined the parameters of this investigation (a similarly ongoing process) and *conversational bones*, a distillation of the initial conversations that informed this research. Dividing the text into these groupings has limitations. It is an attempt to capture some of the ideas and cultural and therapeutic practices that informed this research at the outset. In my experience, however, ideas and practices are harder to separate than western tradition, with its ingrained dualistic models, would have us believe. Indeed, central to many of these ideas are the explicitly interconnected constructs: power/knowledge (Foucault, 1981, Lather, 1991, White, 1997, Davies, 2000), personal/professional and social/political (Madigan & Epston, 1995, White & Hales, 1997, Swan, 1999, McLeod, 1999, Wosket, 1999).

If research is a discourse, it is a discourse that privileges certain traditions. It particularly privileges written traditions. How best then, to enter this world, to understand these skills and knowledges and find a voice, a practice of the self, that will:

'allow these games of power to be played with the minimum of domination' (Foucault, 1988, p18)

At the outset of this research endeavour perhaps I can only acknowledge the inevitable power imbalances that exist between researcher and researched and also say something about where this

Ph.D. comes from. Writing, a privileged pursuit, emerges out of conversations with others. Foucault (1977) suggests that we might sign our writing not with our own names but rather, with the names of those people with whom the conversations took place that pre-empted the writing. Immediately I find myself scuppered. A doctoral thesis has to be my 'own work' (whatever that means) and if I were to take up Foucault's suggestion the list of authors would be impossibly long. I can only say that this is a multi-voiced text that has enjoyed much engagement and interaction with the people it is about. There are also many other invisible contributions.

Chapter two: The Barebones of Ideas

The fluctuating landscape of ideas, beliefs and assumptions that make up my own 'webs of significance' (Geertz, 1973, p3-30) determine what I choose to notice, what I am capable of knowing and seeing, the ways I am able to act and tools and methods I am able to use as a researcher. As Clarkson (1994a, p4) observes: -

'Where the explication and exploration of these values are hedged, dodged or excused, they exist nonetheless - probably more virulent in neglect than in the care-full monitoring of pervasive potency for good or ill'.

Inevitably these ideas embodied in my person and embedded in my cultural context as they are, have been changing and shifting over the five years of this project (1996-2001). Indeed, the process of undertaking this research, coinciding as it has done with a narrative turn within the counselling field, has shaped my ideas and practices. There is a danger in setting down first my ideas followed by their applications and ethical dimensions, as if somehow the ideas were an underpinning rather than an unfolding part of the map. I have 'tried on' these two chapters and the subsequent discussions of research ideas and practices in a number of ways. I am still wearing the clothes lightly, although also mindfully. I found myself more comfortable once I had outlined the trace elements of ideas and could move into the arena of the lived experience of ideas as methodological and ethical research practices. It occurs to me that this is what my ideas are, and that I am only comfortable wearing them when they are rooted in practices. If there is a danger of abstraction or lack of movement, I experience dis-ease. Perhaps my Jewish heritage has some part to play in this. Adaptability and transferability have always been key skills and knowledges in the survival of Jewish peoples and their cultures. I am reminded of the work of the anthropologist, Barbara Myerhoff (1980, 1986), who has remained an unrivalled 'researcher heroine' of mine in her writings and films. In describing the flexible practices of the elderly Jewish population of Venice, Florida, Myerhoff wrote (1980):

> 'Being so rooted in their Judaism helped the old people in their struggles and celebrations. They were sufficiently comfortable with it to improvise upon it and adapt it freely as needed, for small requirements and large. Basha exemplified this when she described her dinner preparations....p32'

Perhaps I am also speaking of the researcher positions that I am pretending towards as I engage in this study and search for comfortable roots to improvise upon and adapt.

I am primarily an educator and a practitioner, a far cry from the new breed of 'philosophical counsellors' (Schuster, 1999, Marinoff & Kapklien, 1999). My ideas have taken and shifted shape over time through my practices of living and working, rather than the other way around. If I were to accede to the authority of any particular voices in the cacophony of experts in human science research, it would be the feminist pragmatists (Reinharz, 1992, Crawford & Kimmel, 1999) and the action-orientated researchers such as Freire (1982, 1998) and Maurice Punch, (1994) urging me to come clean about my muddy boots and grubby hands, but also to 'simply go out and do it' (p95).

I have been influenced by both humanistic and social constructionist ideas as a teacher and practitioner and also by feminism and post-modernism. There has been some conflict and some overlap between these endeavours. Humanistic, feminist and liberation education are in theory closely connected, although in practice, like Kearney (1996) and Swan (1999,) my work as a humanistic therapist always felt, 'like compromising the political to attend to individual emotional experiences' (p103).

In the course of this research project I rediscovered narrative practices (of which more in part three) and experienced an enormous sense of homecoming. In eschewing essentialist theories of human nature in favour of co-constructed meanings through story and conversation, narrative therapists had brought together the post-modern, poststructuralist and feminist ideas that informed my thinking, together with working practices that felt both compassionate and effective (see White & Epston, 1990, Epston & White, 1992, Parry & Doan, 1994, Freedman & Combs, 1996, Monk, et al., 1997, McLeod, 1997, White, 1997, 2000, 2000a, and Bird, 2000, more of whom in Part Three).

Client's stories have always made a difference to me, as did the stories collected in this study. They are stories that have been added to my archives of work experiences. They have also often

re-authored something in my own life. It is this richness, diversity and sense of story that has sustained me in the work I do as a therapist. This became equally true of my work as a researcher.

A brief outline tracing the elements of this journey, in so far as I can describe them, would seem a useful background in which to embed the ethical and methodological bones of this study.

Ideas and practices-a short story

The humanist and constructionist paradigms have been extensively rehearsed elsewhere (see: Rogers, 1957, Brazier, 1993, Rennie, 1998, McNamee & Gergen, 1992, Manusco, 1996, Sexton & Griffin, 1997 for an overview). It is impossible to do justice to their complexity here, other than to outline my own understanding, and re-fashioning of their interrelationship and irreconcilability. A tension that was not so much resolved as embraced for me as I stepped into a narrative way of knowing and understanding. A socially dynamic, rather than passive, process of re-invention, wherein people:

'creatively refashion and adapt the knowledge, values and ideas they receive' (Gullestad, 1996, 31).

The social constructivist and constructionist paradigms have existed a long time within counselling psychology (Kelly, 1955, Maher 1969, Mair 1989). They have experienced considerable renewed interest and exploration (McNamee & Gergen 1992, Manusco 1996, Sexton & Griffin 1997, Dowd et al., 1998) as many counsellors and counselling researchers have moved away from positivist explanations of reality towards the possibility of 'multiple stories' posited by postmodernist and narrative thinkers. Constructivists have regarded personal agency and co-construction as the generators of meaning in our worlds and realities, whereas, constructionists have been more interested in the external shaping of our realities by social, cultural and historical contexts (Gergen & Gergen, 1991). This feels somewhat like the 'nature/ nurture' debate, whereas a multiply storied account of reality might prove more fruitful for my purposes. Certainly, it is the constructivist tradition, with its roots in hermeneutics, that allows for connections with humanistic traditions and that was my starting point as this study commenced. Later I was to move towards more of a constructionist stance as this was centrally concerned 'not with individuals but with relational networks' (McNamee & Gergen, 1992a, p5).

The humanistic paradigm has an emphasis on our unique reflexive struggle as humans to create meaning (see: Frankl, 1973, Rogers, 1963 for examples). This can be located both within an existentialist and a social constructivist framework, although there are some tensions and contentions with this view. Indeed, the very notion of humanistic constructivism may seem an oxymoron to some (Taylor, 1989, Shotter, 1995b) who would argue that constructivism represents a move away from the humanistic discourse with its emphasis on isolated individuals as the prime movers in their journey to becoming a fully functioning person. If we are to accept, however, that 'we do not assume that people's identities are stable and singular' (Drewery & Winslade 1997, p39) and that truths and knowledges are constructions within the engendered and culture-specific minds of individuals and social groupings (Hayes & Oppenhein 1997) it also seems not only possible, but desirable to retain the 'language of intention' (Gergen 1997b, p732) of humanism. It is surely the constructivist assertion that reality is co-created, with its implicit emphasis on participation and explicit emphasis on 'agency' that provides the strongest links with humanistic values.

Gergen (1992, 1997b), albeit himself a social constructionist, has argued against the specific privileging of the cultural over individuals and their agency. There is room here for what Van Deurzen (1998) would describe, in existential terms, as 'co-agency':

' In this sense we can redefine ourselves as our clients' colleagues in the job of living, partners in the solving of the mysteries of life' (p109).

A humanistic emphasis on the struggle to overcome our conditions of worth, the limits to human potential that are imposed on us in our particular social and personal contexts (see: Rogers, 1951, Rennie, 1998) can be seen as a multi-faceted opportunity.

The constructivist abandonment of a static 'sense of self', moreover, can lead to an understanding of our 'selves' as agents in the construction of 'reality' that has considerable overlap with feminist and humanistic concepts of empowerment and personal change (Niemeyer, 1998), with existential understandings of the self as a process, rather than an essence, as a centre of narrative gravity (Dennett, 1991) and with ecological and participatory world views of human networks: -

'In a participative world-view the purpose of knowledge is practical: human flourishing, in its widest sense. This means the flourishing of human communities, and it also must mean

reconnecting the human persons and communities to the ecological networks of which we are an integral part' (Reason 1998, p44).

Indeed, a narrative, or post modern 'multi-storied' worldview does not necessarily discard or diminish humanistic or other frameworks for understanding human nature, nor does it privilege them. Similarly it does not discard or privilege dominant or marginal voices. To quote Gergen (1992):

> 'the post-modern argument is not against the various schools of therapy, only against their posture of authoritative truth' (p57)

This presumably holds true for different schools and brand names of research too.

It must be wholly possible to acknowledge and experience the potential or 'agency' of human beings as they search for meaning in their lives and at the same time accept the socio-culturally and linguistically determined constraints or conditions of worth (within an existentialist/ humanistic paradigm) and contexts and discourses (within a constructivist paradigm) of that agency.

The 'trace elements' of these ideas, which shifted shape slightly during the course of this study as they rubbed shoulders with ethical considerations and research practices, are clearly in a strong relationship with methods of investigation that privilege researcher reflexivity and situated and contextualised accounts. It transpired that these were both contested research domains.

Feminism, post-structuralism and researching in a storied world.

Lyotard (1984, pxxiv) defined postmodernism as 'an incredulity towards metanarratives' and this has had such broad reaching origins and influences that it seems important not to imply that this study, which is essentially a piece of practitioner research, has been informed by all such incredulities.

I am not familiar, for example, with the thinking of phenomenological philosophers such as Heiddegger and Husserl, or at least only insofar as they influenced the literatures of more applied fields such as heuristic research and reflexivity (Moustakas, 1988, 1990), cultural anthropology, narrative psychology and their contribution to meaning-making in everyday life (Myerhoff, 1980, 1986, Geertz, 1978, 1983, Bruner, 1986, 1990). I am equally unfamiliar with the structuralism of Althusser, Bachelard and Wittgenstein and have come across their ideas only as the precursors to

the work of feminist writers and researchers (Belenky, et al., 1986, Lather, 1991, Hooks, 1984, 1990) and the works of poststructuralist writers, deconstructing taken-for-granted assumptions in language, knowledge and power (Derrida, 1978, 1981, Foucault, 1973, 1980, 1988). Poststructuralist thought, a very different tradition from the phenomenological thinking behind much qualitative inquiry, has profoundly influenced this study.

Phenomenology, broadly speaking, sets out to explore everyday experience exhaustively, it sets out to make the familiar unfamiliar, and in so doing also puts the experience of the inquirer under heavy scrutiny, hence the connection, made above, with reflexivity and heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1994, Guba & Lincoln, 1994, Sokolowski, 2000). Poststructuralist thought, however, critiques and de-constructs the dominant and other discourses and interrogates sites of these, and other grand narratives, and has informed this study in multiple and very different ways (see: Minh-Ha, 1991, Sarup, 1993, Lather, 1991, Davies, 2000, 2000a). These two ways of knowing are not consistent with each other. They represent co-existing and divergent ways of viewing the world. Another story, embedded within this text, is a transition from the phenomenological to the poststructuralist ideas that shaped my own worldview.

When I embarked on this project, in 1996, my therapeutic practices and my interest in and understanding of feminist and poststructuralist ideas were all placed in separate compartments of my life and work, albeit with connecting doors ajar. During the course of this study these ideas and practices were challenged, changed and linked through a growing understanding of living and working in a 'storied world'. I hope that this study, in turn, will be descriptive, although not definitive of that process. This was a major shift. I started this research very much in practitioner-researcher mode, convinced that research, to be meaningful in an applied field, should be 'real world research' (Robson, 1993, McLeod, 1999) rooted in practice.

I have been forced to abandon my own certainties as the ideas that emerged during the course of this study have challenged, conjoined with, and irretrievably changed my own therapeutic practices. Notions of research congruent with my practice, expressed so clearly in the introduction, became somewhat paradoxical when research conducted within, but situated right at the edges of what Vygotsky would describe as my 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978, p 86) challenged those practices.

Narrative ideas and practices are inclusive, and to a certain extent derivative of feminist commitments to local knowledges and marginalized voices (Byrne & McCarthy, 1999, Swan, 1999, Bird, 2000). The very act of giving equal legitimacy and potential to a 'multiplicity of voices', including my own voice, whether hidden, forgotten, or current and influential, immediately alters the nature of the discourse, shifts the balance of power relations and makes it known that some voices have more meaning-making power than others. To quote hooks (1984, 1990) the black-American feminist/post-modernist writer:

> ' to be in the margin is to be part of the whole, but outside the main body.... we could enter that world but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin'(1984, p1).

To privilege neither the main body nor the margins, to consider both the local and expert skills and knowledges that people bring to bear on their situations equally valid immediately makes a political impact, not least within the customs and mores of the 'personal problems professions' and their concomitant research industry (see: Foucault, 1973, 1980, Lather, 1997, White, 1997, White, 2000, for more on this political impact) which I shall return to at some length in Part Three.

Notions of multi-storied lives and contexts allow us as researchers and as practitioners not to privilege a particular story that fits with our own taken-for granted practices, but rather invite us to tell and retell stories with our clients and our co-researchers from different positions (Epston & White, 1992, Wingard, 1999, Weingarten, 1999). Indeed, some narrative therapists describe their work as co-research and question the boundaries between these two activities (Epston, 1999). In this way our descriptions become richer and thicker with possibility and meaning, rather than deeper and nearer to the truth or core of our human potential.

Positioning conversations and stories as constitutive of meaning puts the principal researcher, interviewer or storyteller firmly in the hot seat in terms issues of power, ownership, control and reflexivity (see: Foucault, 1980, Starhawk, 1998, Speedy, 1998, Josselson, 1996, Etherington, 2000 for discussions of power relations). Reflexivity, as opposed to self awareness and personal development or reflective practices (Schön, 1991) is a complex and multi-storied territory within which constructs of academic privilege and indulgence (Lynch, 2000) are juxtaposed against absent, but implicit normative researcher powers and ownerships (Foucault, 1977, Lather, 1997).

The struggle to situate myself in this text with sufficient transparency to allow readers to find the spaces and contradictions that would enable them to position themselves differently and critically, without privileging the author's voice to the extent of dominating all other voices, remained constant. This struggle seemed best served by close attention to experiments with styles of writing, storytelling and the layering and representation of accounts that emerged in Part Three (Richardson, 1991, 1994, 2000, Lather, 1997, Ronai, 1995, 1998, 1999)

In setting down something about the nature of these bones, I have discovered more about my own inconsistencies and contradictions, ways of knowing and ways of seeing. I have remembered again that the act of writing is not merely a way of recording what is already apparent, but is also a way of transforming, sustaining and creating knowledge. It is also a privileged aspect of human inquiry of which we need to take very great care:

> ' In taking such care we will have to free ourselves enough to imagine how things may be beyond the ways we have been taught not to see and not to say' (Mair, 1989, p13).

Chapter three: methodological bones and practices

There appeared, at the outset, to be a veritable cornucopia of research methods, congruent with the ideas and values above. Patton (1990) and McLeod (1994) proposed that the choice of methodology be generated by the research question, a pragmatic approach that generated itself later in this study. At this early stage, however, there was no research question, only a counselling training culture to explore and a willing group of people to join me in that exploration.

The literature of research, at first glance abundant with promise, seemed to be littered with contested, prescribed and closely guarded territories that smacked of what Janesick (1994) described as:

> 'methodolatry… a preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the actual substance of the story being told' (p215)

Grounded theory, for example, (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Glaser, 1978, 1982, Strauss & Corbin, 1990,1994, Charmaz, 1995) originally a departure from established traditions of modernist research, is now a well-established and rigorously explored branch of qualitative inquiry that has gained considerable favour amongst counselling researchers (see: Rennie, 1992, 1996, 1994a, 1998,1998a, 1998b, Etherington, 1994, O'Callaghan, 1998, McLeod, 2001, pp70-90). In principle, the notion of grounding theoretical constructs or the construction of meanings in the text offers considerable consistency with my own worldview, although it appeared to privilege the 'data' and the principal researcher over and above its co construction with participants. In practice, grounded theory as a specific method of analysis has become a territory with a 'logic of justification' hotly disputed by its original exponents and their followers alike (Glaser, 1992, Strauss & Corbin, 1994, Rennie, 1998b, 1998c, Corbin, 1998). These territorial disputes, of passionate significance to those involved, have been somewhat re-authored by constructivist grounded theorists (Charmaz, 1995, 2000, Mitchell & Charmaz, 1996) who seem to have broken free of the prescriptive constraints of 'methodolatry'… (Janescik, 1994, p215), but it has all seemed a far cry from Rowan's (1998) notion of 'non-alienating (p157)' research. Qualitative research, like counselling and psychotherapy, was beginning to smack of 'brand naming'

(McLeod, 1998, pp189-96) and 'schoolism' Clarkson 1998, p1-12). In writing about academic 'tribes' in general, Becher (1989) notes a common tendency to produce models that are so complex as to become unfunctional. Simplicity has, perhaps, remained an underrated 'quality control' check in the development of research methodology.

The counselling research domain

An overview of the generic guides and handbooks to research in the counselling field on both sides of the Atlantic that were either available at the outset, or were published during the course of this study (Heppner, et al., 1992, Watkins and Schneider, 1991, Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 1994, Bergin and Garfield, 1994, McLeod, 1994, 1999, 2001, Aveline & Shapiro, 1995, Dryden, 1996, Roth & Fonagy, 1996, Toukmanion & Rennie, 1996, Clarkson, 1998d, Rowland & Goss, 2000) reveals almost total domination by psychologists. This dominance is interesting considering the interdisciplinary nature of counselling , this side of the Atlantic, (see: Thorne & Dryden, 1993, Erwin, 1997, Dryden, et al., 2000, McLeod, 2001a) both in terms of the original backgrounds of the professional membership and the contributing disciplines that have informed practices. These include psychology, but also anthropology, sociology, philosophy, education, social work, theology and the study of literature and the arts.

The domination of the British, as well as the North American counselling research industry by one particular discipline, a discipline that had itself been totally captured by the traditional positivist 'scientific experimental model' of research until very recently (Turner, 1998, Parker, 1999, McLeod, 2001) might have some bearing on the putative 'research-practice' gap that this project came to focus on.

My own first degree had been in history and politics. I could appreciate the valuable contributions that my colleagues with a background in experimental psychology had made to the counselling field, particularly in the area of audit and evaluation of our work and to counselling outcomes research (see: Mellor-Clark & Shapiro, 1995, McLeod, 1995, Hudson-Allez, 1999, Sherr, et al., 1999, Mellor-Clark, et al, 1999, Watson & Winter, 2000, Rowland and Goss, 2000 for examples of this). I was also somewhat frustrated by the lengthy explorations that many researchers seemed to have to go through in the past before breaking out of, or slightly challenging, the traditional 'distant' and 'objective' research cultures of their discipline (Harré, 1992, Harré, 1993, Balmer,

1994, Bergin & Garfield, 1994a, McMullen, 1995, Stanton Rogers & Stanton Rogers, 1997 all exemplify this).

This 'break out' was frustrating in that it seemed light years behind the feminist-poststructuralist accounts alluded to in the previous chapter. It was also being manifested some thirty years after Devereux's (1967) psychoanalytic critique of researcher counter-transferences in the behavioural sciences and some twenty years after feminists (Oakley, 1981) and social and cultural anthropologists (Myerhoff, 1980) had been transparently discussing the position and influence of the 'principal researcher' within the text:

> 'For a long time I resisted this. I wanted to focus on the center, not myself, but it became clear that what was being written was from my eyes, with my personality, biases, history and sensibility, and it seemed dishonest to exclude that, thereby giving an impression of greater objectivity and authority than I believed in' (Myerhoff, 1980, p30).

I was drawn to, and felt much more at home with, the work of anthropologists such as Myerhoff, (1975, 1979), Geertz, (1973, 1978) and Turner (1982, 1986), ethnographers and auto-ethnographers (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, Ellis, 1995, Ronai, 1995), sociologists (Oakley, 1981, Denzin, 1997, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, 2000) and feminist educationalists such as, Reinharz, (1992), Lather, (1991, 1997), Davies, (1991, 2000) and Janesick (1994 2000). These texts seemed to wear reflexive, contextualised knowledges with relative comfort and to be more participative in their assumptions about the nature and purposes of research.

Participative inquiry

The participative 'human inquiry' or 'new paradigm' researchers seemed to have developed similar practices that had, to some extent, been tried and tested in counselling research (West, 1995, 1996, 1998, Rowan, 1998) although, as Reason & Rowan, (1981), would readily acknowledge, many feminists had already 'been doing new paradigm research for a long time with little recognition and credibility' (Burns, 1990, p161).

This study is not, however, a truly co-operative inquiry since I have managed the entire research process, will write the entire report, and also intend to submit my findings as a Ph.D. thesis, claiming them as my own 'original contribution' to the body of knowledge in this field. For my

purposes, I feel more comfortable with Reason's (1994) broader definitions of participative inquiry and Rowan's (1998) term, substantially 'non-alienating' research.

In theory, a study of a group of colleagues who had access to the 'principal researcher' and each other was an ideal setting for a human inquiry group. In practice I had no additional sources of funding with which to maintain a co-operative inquiry group. The contractual and economic relationship of my co-researchers with the University was later to become a key organisational factor in this study and, indeed, in my conclusions about the sustainability of counselling research as an integrated element of our endeavours at the University of Bristol.

The decision to adhere to participative and democratic principles of participatory research (see: Reason, 1991,1994, 1994a, Reason & Heron, 1995, Reason, 1998) without fully subscribing to the practice of shared ownership and development of the research process has much in common with what 'innovative feminist' researchers describe as 'principled pragmatics' (Russo, 1999, Crawford & Kimmel, 1999). I would concur with Bond (1998) in his conclusions that participative research processes that are consultative and involve substantial member checking processes, but are not fully cooperative, come with a:

'corresponding cost to the researcher in administering and responding to cycles of consultation undertaken by correspondence and telephone.' (pp52-53)

Indeed, this particular study involved the principal researcher and co-researchers in innumerable individual and secondary consultation processes, as well as eight primary cycles of consultation, illustrated in diagrammatic form in the table below.

Table A: **Primary cycles of participation as co-researchers**	
1) Initial consent	Initial consent forms to take part in the research and basic demographic information sheets filled in and signed by participants in the initial conversations. Spring 1996.
2) Initial conversations	Draft chapter five: 'conversational bones', and draft introduction seen by all six participants in the initial conversations, Spring 1997.

3) Extended consent and demographic information	Consent forms and demographic information, as above, completed by all co-researchers from the Bristol staff group. Summer 1997.
4) Vocational interest inventories	Vocational interest inventory results and profiles sent out to all co-researchers with accompanying letters. Autumn 1997.
5) Survey results	Copies of my paper given at the BAC research conference, May 1998, outlining the 'research attitudes survey' findings for Britain, and including the separate information for Bristol (not presented at the BAC conference, see: appendix three) sent to all co-researchers for comments. Summer 1998.
6) Extended conversations	Full transcripts of all conversations and follow-up re-tellings shared with, and altered in consultation with all fifteen co-researchers. Spring1999-Spring 2000.
6) Stories in stanza form	Transcripts in stanza form of each core story sent to individual co-researchers. Winter 1999-Autumn2000.
7) Stories in stanza form in identifiable groupings	Final transcripts of core stories, plus information about how this information was to be interpreted and represented were shared and altered in consultation with all 15 co-researchers. Summer 2000.
8) Additional material from conversations 'about the research'	Final drafts of 'ethics' chapters and 'layered accounts' developed from the stories checked with co-researchers, together with 'epilogue' questions about the launch of the new BACP research journal. Autumn 2000-Spring 2001.

The principles of participative inquiry (Reason, 1988, 1994) of co-created, co-validated research, of a cyclical process of inquiry and of concurrent forms of propositional, practical, experiential and presentational knowledge (Reason & Heron, 1995, Heron 1996) provided me with useful insights that became incorporated into my own research model.

In particular, the attention to group processes and power issues, including the rights and powers and duties of co-researchers, well-established within cooperative inquiry methods (Reason &

Rowan, 1981a, Marshall & McLean, 1988, Whitmore (1994) , Archer & Whitaker , 1994 and Reason, 1994 & Heron, 1996) seemed pertinent to this project as I was investigating a situation in which I was myself deeply personally and culturally embedded.

The construct of critical subjectivity, tried and tested amongst co-operative inquirers (Reason, 1988, Heron, 1996, and West, 1998) usefully alerted this researcher to the possibilities of 'consensus collusion' although I preferred my own version (informed by Davies & Harré, 1990, pp 4-10) of 'positioning and being positioned' to the more psychoanalytic 'unaware projections' (Heron, 1996, pp146-54).

Heuristic Influences

The heuristic research approach developed by Moustakas et al., (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, Moustakas, 1981,1990, 1994) is particularly attractive to humanistic counsellors and therapists. The heuristic research endeavour is undertaken and filtered through a process of researcher self – discovery akin to Gendlin's (1962, 1981) constructs of indwelling and focusing. It also has something of a pedigree in counselling research circles (West, 1998a, 1998b, Pittock, 1999, 2001) although often used in conjunction with other approaches (West, 1998b). Moustakas's (1990) model of immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, validation and creative synthesis certainly describes a research cycle that I experienced. The periods of 'incubation' followed by illumination became particularly significant within this study, although this appeared to be descriptive of processes of human creativity in general (see: Bohm, 1998, Jones, 1998), rather than specifically research processes.

I came to realise that although 'heuristic research' gave an appropriate description of the process of reflective inquiry, it did not assist me greatly in my search for appropriate or practical ways of conducting this study. It did not address ways of adequately analysing, representing and honouring the rich seams of the oral/aural data that I had acquired. More particularly, although it provided a framework for researcher reflections, in an internalised, personal, indwelling sense, it did not seem to address the more outgoing dialogic and culturally embedded relationships between researcher and researched, encapsulated by 'critical subjectivity', or the relationship, engagement and spaces between and constitutive of researcher and research practices, processes and events, that I came to

understand as 'reflexivity' (Hollway, 1989, Gergen & Gergen , 1991, Hertz, 1997) and McLeod (2001) has subsequently described as 'critical reflexivity'.

A paucity of research models in the counselling field

I felt slightly nervous that my primary role models, apart from these connexions with cooperative and heuristic traditions, were not themselves counselling or psychotherapy researchers, but despite a growing body of British work critiquing traditional counselling research frameworks, and urging researchers to conduct more contextualised, reflexive research (House, 1996, Turner, 1998, Wosket, 1999, McLeod, 1999, 1999b, McLeod, 2001, 2001a), studies of this nature were either not being undertaken, or were remaining unpublished.

With notable exceptions, such as Heron's (1974, 1974a, 1978) cooperative inquiries into the peer learning cultures of South West London, Abbot's (1988) explorations of the 'personal problems jurisdiction', Kitzinger and Perkins's (1993) critique of the psychologising of Lesbianism an illustrative, hermeneutic case study in McLeod (1997, p125-137) and Peter Cushman's (1995) seminal work on the cultural history of North American Psychotherapy, counselling research seemed to have been largely about the processes and effectivenesses of counselling practices (of therapy, supervision and training). Occasionally research studies contextualised these practices (McLeod & Machin, 1998, West, 1998c) but not the professional communities or personal and professional histories that shaped and were constitutive of these practices.

Research into the therapeutic practices of counsellors and experiences of their clients is undeniably important, but the emphasis on these practices as if in isolation, rather than in connexion, seemed to perpetuate the idea of counselling being a very individualistic and private endeavour, taking place within a social vacuum, rather than about culturally, politically or historically shaped ideas about the 'self as project' (Giddens, 1991) or the socio-political functions and purposes of psychotherapy within our current cultural landscape (Cushman, 1995). There seemed to be a marked lack of curiosity about the growth of counselling as an individualistic enterprise during Thatcher's Britain (Elton-Wilson, 1996, pp1-11, Speedy, 2001) in which there was 'no society, only individuals and their families' (Thatcher, 1993, quoted in: Booth, 2000, pp2-5). There seemed to be little speculation about the motives for the current critique of counselling's modest research base from those of us trying to establish our credibility in university settings (McLeod, 1994, 1999,

Dryden, 1996, Goss and Rowland 2000). It was as if counselling and psychotherapy, unlike nursing (Davies, 1995) social work (Taylor, 1997) or teaching (Furlong, 2000) was neither a social nor a political process (see: McLeod, 1999a and House, 2001 for the beginnings of a challenge to this orthodoxy).

Counselling researchers, with their legitimate concerns about client confidentiality and re-traumatisation have sometimes claimed particular privileges and sensitivities for their discipline with regard to collaborative or exposing research studies (Etherington, 1996, 2000, McLeod, 1999, 2001). At the same time, feminist researchers have produced collaborative studies with women with HIV/ AIDS (Lather, 1997) and auto-ethnographic studies of childhood sexual abuse and bereavement and loss (Ronai, 1995, Ellis, 1995) that are personally and professionally exposing of both themselves and participants. Were counselling researchers more attuned to the complexities and pitfalls of confidentiality, or were they more hierarchical in perspective and unable to view clients as co-researchers?

During the course of this study two counselling research texts have appeared in Britain that go some way to breaking the mould in placing the authors, as well as their clients within the text (Wosket, 1999, Etherington, 2000). Within both these texts the authors or principal researchers situate themselves both as people and as professionals. The authors speak from embodied, and to a certain extent, culturally embedded voices. Wosket (1999, pp108-163) stepped outside the psychotherapeutic tradition of monographs that highlight exemplary practice (Casement, 1985, 1990, Yalom, 1989) and positioned herself within the context of actual, embodied, flawed therapeutic practices as opposed to re-ified models. Etherington (2000), by interspersing the text with fictionalised insights into her own life and her relationships with her clients/co-researchers (pp 103-106, 247-252, 302-306) demonstrates a reflexivity, as well as personal reflectiveness, reminiscent of Mair whose seminal work on tacit and personal knowledges (1989) was a challenge to the cultures of experimental psychology outlined above and a reminder that:

> 'Unless we come more fully to know ourselves and each other, care enough to know more of what it is to know and be known, to know and not to know, then we may not create the means by which to care beyond the limits of our present often careless and uncaring ways' (ibid, p22).

Yet neither of these authors (Etherington nor Wosket) places their studies firmly within any social or political frameworks. There is no sense that either of these studies might be constituted by, or constitutive of the cultures and practices of counselling. It was as if the cultures and politics of gender and power, of sexuality and the psychologising and pathologising of lesbianism, or issues of social class and access to counsellors in private practice were background or marginal issues or perhaps of significance only in their client's lives. The socio-cultural contexts and functions of counselling practice were not viewed as significantly shaping the therapeutic endeavours these practitioners were writing about (see: White, 1997) or the purposes and limitations of the 'personal problems' domain in British society. I began to agree with Loewenthal, (1996) who argued that:

> 'Hollway's (1989) criticism of 'the almost intentional blindness of psychology to its own conditions of production' appears applicable to counselling, psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic research' (p377).

I wondered whether it was impossible to produce culturally embedded and concurrently personally embodied texts and whether highlighting one aspect inevitably diminished the other, and yet feminists (Lather, 1997, Davies, 1991, 2000) and ethnographers (Ellis, 1995, Ronai, 1995, 1996) and narrative researchers (Bar-on & Gilad, 1994, Abma, 1999, Chase, 1996, Lieblich, 1998) and narrative practitioners (Weingarten 1995, White & Hales, 1997, Elliott, 1997, White, 1997) all seemed to be able to do so.

The narrative turn, feminism, conversational research and crystallisation.

In his treatise on systems of logic, Stuart Mill (1843) maintained that new ideas pass through three phases of denial, firstly that they are wrong, secondly that they are against religion and thirdly that they are old news, trivial and common sense. There have been many such critiques of the 'narrative turn' in the human sciences (see: Atkinson & Silverman, 1997), but Denzin and Lincoln (2000) in their recent overview of the qualitative research field, imply that the current, post-modern 'take' on living in a storied world has passed through these rites of passage and that by the end of the twentieth century we had arrived at 'the narrative turn'. They argue that this moment overlaps and simultaneously operates with the other seven moments in the history of research, traditional, modern, blurred genres, crises of representation, post-modern, post experimental and

future moments, as yet dimly grasped (see also this text, 'acknowledging ethical pluralities' p60-64).

This legitimising of the sixth moment, the narrative, post-experimental turn, as an established tradition, was not my experience of British counselling research where such texts were few and far between (McLeod, 1997, Etherington, 2000, Crossley, 2000, for example, remain exceptions). It nonetheless seemed to give permissions to the development of 'multi-storied' texts that told the same story from different points of view, and in so doing, allowed for inconsistencies, contradictions, gaps and cracks to emerge. These gaps or 'liminal spaces' (see: Bachelard, 1986, Broadhurst, 1999) at the margins, provided opportunities, or points of entry to 'other' sites and performances, perhaps without the need for 'closure' or tightly proscribed definitions. This approach seemed to invite the use of multiple methods, thus capturing as many realities as possible, and 'telling different stories' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a).

These seven moments are themselves an imperfect and over-simplistic 'device' but one that usefully allows a history of research to emerge that includes traditional 'objective' studies of 'the other', modernist texts, that, like grounded theory, engage in 'rigorous' analysis that privileges the 'data'; blurred genres, that offer 'thick' descriptions and interdisciplinary discussion, the crisis of representation, the fourth moment, wherein researchers began to experiment with 'position' in the text and with styles of representation, such as poetic and layered accounts, the fifth moment, a more politicised and transgressive understanding of 'post-modern' research , the current, sixth moment of the post-experimental narrative turn and the 'seventh moment' or the future.

Feminist researchers also strongly legitimised the production of pluralistic, multi-storied research texts. Reinharz (1992) advocated using multiple methods and transgressing disciplinary boundaries, Olesen (1994) urges us to create multiple texts and Crawford & Kimmel (1999) encouraged diversity and claimed that 'both the traditional methods of psychology and methods yet unimagined can serve feminist ends'(p2). This study is not feminist in the sense that it is 'about women' or even 'gender' as such. Nonetheless, I find it impossible, as a woman manager researching my colleagues in'the world turned upside down' of counselling training (Speedy 1998b, p31), not to be acutely aware of the impact of gender. Particularly as this world seems to swiftly turn back the other way up when we enter the male-dominated world of counselling research. 'Any gaze is filtered through the lens of social class, race and ethnicity' according to

Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p12) and counselling, counselling research and counselling training are highly engendered activities (see: Johns, 1990, Speedy, 1998b, Mcleod, 1997c).

Resting somewhere alongside the narrative traditions of research as storytelling (Bruner, 1986, McLeod, 1997) outlined in the introduction to this study, and the feminist and 'oral history' approaches outlined above, is the body of narrative and life story work produced by Josselson & Lieblich, et. al. (1993,1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, Lieblich and Josselson, et, al.,1994, 1997, 1998). This body of work also warns against 'cookbook' research models (Josselson, 1999) and seems to appreciate both quantitative and qualitative stories that might fuse into:

> ' a combination of detailed knowledge of the life of a relatively small number of individuals and quantifiable data on many people provides ideal possibilities for understanding and explaining the social world' (Josselson, 1999, p xii).

Despite the concerns voiced by some that qualitative and quantitative approaches are tapping different aspects of a phenomenon (Bryman, 1992) and have a different logic of justification that privileges one voice, and perhaps one set of researcher skills, over the other (see: Bryman, 1992,and also McLeod, 1994, pp176-191, 2001, pp119-130), I was very drawn to the pluralism of Josselson & Lieblich, and particularly to their argument (1997) for 'conversation as method' (p vi-vii).

The (Josselson, et al., 1997) treatise on conversation as method seemed to acknowledge the unevenness of multiply storied texts and was presented as a conversation between several researchers about phenomena that they had all studied from different points of view, bringing their diverse approaches into the dialogue. They began by inviting their readers to join the conversation, witness the differences and make their own judgements, which is very much how I should like to begin this study. In a more ideal world my own study would also have been the work of several researchers, all adding their own strengths and perspectives to the conversation. I was limited to different aspects of myself.

In the conversational study on the relational world of kibbutz inhabitants, outlined above (Josselson, et al., 1997), the researchers were able to draw on the perspectives of three Israelis, all with different relationships to the kibbutz movement, as well as a North American perspective. They also included in their number a very competent statistician, a psychotherapist/narrative

researcher and a psychologist/ life history researcher. Their research method consisted in each telling their own story and then engaging in a conversation in which, within a shared 'narrative' understanding they experienced considerable diversity, contradiction, mutuality and lack of cohesion. They concluded:

> 'perhaps we can know a field of scholarship best when we can engage those areas of tension where multiple facets of understanding intersect, interweave, collide, contradict, and show themselves in their shifting and often paradoxical relation to each other' (Josselson, 1997et el,, p152).

An immense disadvantage of the Ph.D. enterprise is that it requires the principal researcher to engage in a somewhat individualistic, 'original' and therefore frequently solo, research venture. This is not my forte and I am best suited to collective endeavours. I would have liked to have engaged in a similar project with a skilled quantitative researcher and a colleague from an entirely different culture, either geographically or academically, as is often the case with 'funded' research projects. Nonetheless I have used the model of 'conversational' pluralistic research as a template for the conversations between the different stories that this project has comprised. These stories include the contextualizing survey of British integrative counsellor educators (a contribution which would have no doubt been better conducted by a more competent statistician, see Part Two and accompanying appendices, one, two and three), the thematic stories gleaned from research conversations, together with individual stories told by co-researchers. Each of these stories also added to the conversation, as did the critique of the existing literature. It is within the gaps and cracks that exist between these different stories, within the liminal spaces in the conversations that the potencies of this research project emerged. This multi-storied, potentially contradictory series of accounts does not rely on a unifying meta-narrative to make sense of it, but is explored and constituted in reflexive ways, in discussions of the changing understanding the researcher gleans of themselves and others through conversations and relations with the 'text' (Davies, 2000a, Hertz, 1997) and with the various selves that they bring to the research endeavour which Reinharz , (1997, p5) for instance , has identified as research-based, brought and situationally created selves.

This 'necessarily contradictory' notion of research whereby many fragments made up an incomplete conversation has been usefully described by Richardson (1994) and Janesick (2000) as crystallisation. I have found the conversational approach, viewed through the incomplete, partial

lens and refracted light of the crystal a very useful way of describing the kind of research study I was attempting to undertake. Crystallisation describes more, and with less certainty, than a variety of means of triangulation. What we see, when we view a crystal, for instance, does not add validity, but rather alters the view, depending on the angle, the amount of light refracted etc… it is always an incomplete picture. The crystal:

> 'combines symmetry, and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach'
>
> (Richardson, 1994, p522)

Reflexivity, responsibility and power

Many issues of researcher and co-researcher responsibility and power are addressed in Chapter Four on ethical bones, in terms of relationships and checks with participants. A concentration on 'member checking' as a power balance, however, glosses over the enormous 'political' responsibilities for researchers to identify their own reflexive responses that can be hidden underneath 'the myth of silent authorship' (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1997, pp193-216).

Reflexivity seems to be universally acclaimed as an element in maintaining and shaping the integrity of non-traditional research, but is nonetheless a hotly contested construct. Much of this discussion has been captured in Wasserfall's (1997) comparison of 'weak' readings of reflexivity as subjective, self-aware, personally embodied autobiographical reflection, as exemplified by Mykhalovskiy's (1997) discussion of critical self reflection versus self indulgence and in the counselling research texts produced by Wosket (1999) and Etherington (2000) and 'strong' readings of reflexivity as culturally and politically embedded, constitutive and as deconstructing of the author's authorities, positions and exercises of power, such as Lather and Smithies' (1997) very stylised representation of divergent voices.

I sought to capture the 'weak' dimensions of reflexivity within a 'strong' reading, without engaging in some of the very over-mannered, 'precious' ways of writing from my own voices, and above all, without over privileging my own authority by not only writing this entire text, but also adding explicitly 'reflexive' sections within that text. I experimented during the course of the study with sections of poetry, sections of my journal and explicitly labelled 'reflexive researcher' stories. I found myself rather overly represented in these experiments. They also seemed to suggest that

the less overtly reflexive passages were somehow less personally embodied and subjectively authored. I came to the conclusion, alongside Lynch (2000) and Macbeth (2001) in their critique of studied reflexivity that

> 'A constitutive reflexivity has no use for non-reflexive worlds and makes no sense as a demarcation exercise' (Macbeth, ibid, p55)

I have attempted to embrace reflexivity as an 'inexhaustible practice' (ibid) and to explicitly acknowledge that all aspects of this study are reflexive representations, including the representations of the voices of others.

Staking a claim in a contested field

I have made some headway in the last two chapters towards exploring the ideas and bodies of practice that informed this study from the outset, although as the study progressed concerns about representation and translation of both numbers and words further developed these ideas and practices. The problem of how to 'label' the study remained. There has been some recent criticism of the overarching term 'narrative research' (McLeod, 2001), suggesting that this may stretch definitions of 'narrative' too broadly and that 'qualitative' is the preferred 'broad church' label. I had a resistance to describing this as a qualitative project, however, since it contains references to quantitative as well as qualitative accounts. I considered qualifying or refining the 'label' narrative with other descriptions such as poststructuralist, or feminist or pluralist or conversational or even 'crystallised' but none of these seemed necessary additions. In the end I settled for *narrative inquiry*, which seemed the most encompassing and accurate definition of a study that took place within the confines of a storied world and 'is designed to represent a connected series of happenings' (Lieblich, et al.,1998, p2).

Chapter four: Ethical Bones.

Perhaps the most glaring ethical question is: ' why do this study at all?' I constantly return to the issues and dilemmas that are thrown up by someone researching within their organisation (particularly in this chapter, and again in chapters eight, nine, ten, fourteen and fifteen) I repeatedly have to address particular issues of intimacy, power, interconnectedness and dual relationships (see: Lieblich, 1996). So how can I justify gaining a Ph.D. for myself out of a participative inquiry into my own organisation, substantially sustained by conversations with my own colleagues?

My first answer to this question is that I notice other researchers asking similar questions of themselves, despite having no prior connections with their research participants (see, for instance, Finch, 1993, Etherington, 1996, Ortiz, 2001). Secondly, these were the issues that I was already up to my neck in. My research questions arose out of conversations in my workplace and about issues that engaged and intrigued me. Some of these issues have also engaged other practitioner groups who have 'come of age' professionally and found a 'niche' within the academy (see: Davies, 1995, within nursing and Taylor, 1997, within social work). Other concerns seemed unique to this moment and perhaps to the histories of counselling and the people in this study. There are then issues of purpose, currency and immediacy to consider in this ethical decision making process. This was the study that was, quite literally, sitting on my doorstep, waiting to be explored. In order to find another suitable topic for investigation (and there have subsequently been many) I would have had to literally step over this body of work first.

The links between my ways of seeing the world and the ethical and methodological positions that I might take as a researcher or practitioner seem so strong that this separating out into 'labelled' chapters feels increasingly arbitrary. It is nonetheless the research texts and manuals that pay scant attention to ethical issues and standpoints that fill me with the greatest unease. These texts, often proclaimed the straightforward, no-nonsense, real-world research handbooks (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 1997, Robson, 1993, Edwards & Talbot 1994, Fuller & Petch, 1995, Hart & Bond, 1995) move straight into the 'doing' of research and are designed for hard-pressed real worlders. In paying little attention to values and ethics, these texts seem to pay an 'absent but implicit' (White, 2000, p35-59) homage to the normative ethics of traditional research frameworks.

The literature of counselling research attends to ethics, albeit often within the framework of professional codes and guidelines, or as a comparison with the ethical considerations confronting practitioners (Watkins & Schneider, 1991, Rennie, 1994, BAC, 1996a, 1997, West, 1996, Etherington, 1996, 2000, Grafanaki, 1996, Dryden, et al, 1996, Bond, 1992, 1998, Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999, McLeod, 1994, 1999).

The leading edges, in terms of ethical dilemmas and decisions as they presented themselves in this study, were occupied by feminist, participatory, emancipatory and narrative researchers. This is not necessarily a homogeneous grouping, but all these groups have less to gain from the dominant paradigms and are, therefore, less likely to rest easy with taken-for granted implicit assumptions about research practices (Heron & Reason, 1997, Humphries, Mertens & Truman 2000).

The literature of feminist (Olesen, 1994, Lather, 1995, 1997, Grossman, Kruger and Moore, 1999) and co-operative and participative enquiry (Reason, 1994, 1994a, Reason & Heron, 1995, West, 1996, 1998, Rowan, 1998), for instance, takes enormous care over issues of group process, leadership, power and responsibility, both within and outside the fields of counselling and psychotherapy and challenges established constructs such as 'intellectual property'. It is within its tenets of engagement, responsibility, transformation and transgression that feminist participatory and emancipatory inquiry (see: Truman, Mertens & Humphries, 2000) in particular, has developed a vigorous politics and ethics of local and global accountability that is in many ways counter cultural to established western research traditions.

One of the difficulties of addressing 'ethical issues' in any generalised way is that this leads us to binding statements laid down in ethical codes of practice for professionals (Bond, 1992, 2000, McLeod, 1999, Tjeltveit, 2000). These codes and guidelines may have some absolute value where traditional research methods, based on an unquestioning ethics of justice and researcher autonomy, are being used. In practice of course, all aspects of research, from planning, through implementing and representing to reading and evaluating 'reflect ethical or moral issues' (McLeod, 1999, p79) and are more dependent on what Bond (1998, 2000) and Robson et al., (2000) have described as 'ethical problem solving' (Bond, 2000, pp 223-36) than binding codes. This is particularly true where the researcher espouses 'multi-storied' realities, as outlined above, and where ethical codes are points of reference and differentiation rather than absolute codes of conduct.

The traditional values of professional codes have been determined, in the main, by the principles of non-maleficience, beneficence, autonomy and fidelity (Parfit, 1984, Singer, 1994). There have been many challenges to these autonomous ethics of justice, not least from feminists positing a female (Gilligan, 1982, Gatens, 1985) or at least socially constructed (Welch, 1999, Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993) morality based on an ethics of care, and from non-western cultural traditions of an ethics of community and interdependency (Silvester, 1997, Prowell, 1999, Campbell, 1990).

To produce a qualitative multi-layered and multi-voiced research text and to either subscribe to, or reject ethical codes of conduct that have been fixed in specific positions seems incongruent. We may now be living and researching in Denzin & Lincoln's (1994a) sixth moment in the history of research. This does not mean that all previous moments, ways of seeing or understanding could, or should, be discarded, but rather that:

'these moments overlap and simultaneously operate in the present' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a, p2).

What is 'ethical research' in the circumstances we now find ourselves? How will we know 'research validity' when we see it? How do we make judgements about engaging in it, evaluating it and reading it? There are no longer any easy or clear answers to these questions, although they are frequently asked by human science researchers in general (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, 2000a, Richardson, 1993, 1994, Lather, 1991, 1997, Josselson, et al, 1996, 1999, Lieblich, et al., 1998, Seale, 1999) and by counselling researchers in particular (Rennie, 1994, Etherington, 1996, 2000, Bond, 1998, Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999, McLeod, 1994, 1999, Speedy, 2001, Bond 2001).

It seems that there is no alternative, other than to return again and again to a consideration of the ethical issues and dilemmas that arise and are encompassed by each research story according to the research 'moment' it occurs in. Thus, I might return to the more detached or 'bracketed' position and criteria often advocated by counselling and counselling psychology researchers in order to make judgements and solve ethical problems whilst conducting a survey and producing traditional qualitative text (Watkins & Schneider, 1991, Rennie, 1992, 1994, Mahrer, 1996, Hill, et al., 1997, McLeod, 1994, 1999). I might also turn to the more involved position and 'transgressive' criteria advocated typically, but not exclusively, by feminist researchers whilst engaged in active research

Table B: Ethical Pluralities in Research	**Normative Ethics**	**Descriptive ethics**	**Narrative ethics**	**Feminist/ emancipatory ethics**
Philosophy	Positivist	Phenomenological	Post-modernist/ constructivist	Activist
Perspective and ownership	Researcher autonomy	Participants or data usually privileged	Co-created and multiply voiced	Co-created and multiply voiced
Researcher process	Distant/ objective	Acknowledged /bracketed	Reflexive/ integral	Reflexive integral
Ethical standpoint	Ethics of justice	Ethics of care/participation	Ethics of story	Ethics of social change
Ethical codes and guidelines	Binding	Flexible/negotiable	Locally and culturally determined.	Locally and politically determined
Pertinent metaphor	Mending a car	Peeling an onion	Telling a story	Changing the world

(Adapted from McLeod, 1994, 1999, Frank, 1995, Lather, 1997, Bond, 1998, Speedy, 1999, Humphries, 2000, Richardson, 2000.)

conversations (Lather, 1991, 1997, Grossman, et al., 1999, Russell & Bohan, 1999). I shall certainly turn to the more reflexive, co-creative position and text-based criteria advocated by narrative (Frank, 1995, Josselson, 1996a, Josselson & Lieblich, 1995, 1996, 1999, Lieblich, 1996, Lieblich, et al., 1998, McLeod, 2000) and other (Richardson, 1993, 2000, Hertz, 1997, Denzin, 1996) non-traditional researchers whilst engaged in telling and writing my own and other people's stories.

Ethical bones, then, will continue to be dug up and chewed over throughout the course of this study. I can only propose, in this chapter, to introduce ethical explorations through a brief comparison and exploration of counsellor and counselling researcher ethics and to consider the contrasting dimensions of normative, descriptive and narrative ethics (Bond, 1998, 2001, Speedy, 2001b) in relation to this study. This plurality of ethical positions is perhaps most easily illustrated in diagrammatic form, (see: Table B, above).

Researcher and Counsellor positions

One of the paradoxes of the literature of counselling research seems to be that most counselling researchers advocate adherence to the codes of ethics for counsellors as well as guidelines for researchers (BAC, 1996a, 1997, West, 1995, Grafanaki, 1997, Etherington, 1995) and then separate out these identity claims. Studies also frequently cite codes of ethics for researchers from related disciplines such as the ethical principles for conducting human research with human participants from the British Psychological Society (BPS, 1991) and guidelines on anti -sexist and anti -racist language from the British Sociological Association (BSA, 1989a, 1989b). These codes are designed, typically, with the assumption that the researcher is separate from the clinician or from 'the researched', which is clearly not the case in this study.

At the same time, counselling researchers pronounce research and practice fundamentally and ethically different in their purposes, if not their practices (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999, Etherington, 1996, 2000, McLeod, 1994, 1999). Etherington (1996) stresses her discomfort, as a trained counsellor, in undertaking research with very vulnerable participants 'without exploring their feelings and challenging their blind spots and assumptions' (p342) and the need to be clear about the different purposes of these endeavours, whilst McLeod (1999) suggests that 'as an

involved participant in a relationship with a client, it can be very difficult for a counsellor to take a detached view of what is happening, or has happened' (p 84). Etherington (1996, 2000) and Hart & Crawford-Wright (1999) express a concern about the ethical impact of counselling-style research interviews and the difficulties of engaging in dual relationships.

In the 'same moment', narrative therapists are describing their therapeutic practices as co-research (Epston, 1999, Bird, 2000) and others are advocating counselling skills training for social science researchers (Skinner, 1998). Similarly, many feminist researchers, whilst not denying the complexity of dual relationships (Oakley, 1981, Finch, 1993) are suggesting that researcher validity relies on taking a stand against 'researcher professionalism' and advocate working as reflexive consultants to 'researched' communities, the 'researched' being the owners and ethical arbiters of the text (Lather & Smithies, 1997, pp227-237). Perhaps the researcher roles and traditions that counselling researchers have sometimes assigned themselves have more to do with counselling research playing 'catch up' (McLeod, 1999b) with other areas of human science research than differences between researcher and counsellor ethics?

I am not, of course, researching amongst a group of clients as Rennie (1992), Mahrer (1996) Grafanaki (1996), Hart & Crawford-Wright (1999), Etherington (2000), and McLeod (2000), were, so perhaps the ethical dilemmas between counsellor and researcher purposes and codes do not apply to my project? I am, however, an experienced, skilled practitioner, researching a group with whom I am intimately connected and with whom all the issues of intimacy, equality, power and decision-making identified in feminist, organisational and intra-group research practices (Bryman, 1988, Connell & Nord, 1996, Lieblich, 1996, Grossman, et al, 1999, Rhodes, 2000) were ongoing researcher concerns. If we substitute the words 'colleague' for client or counsellor and 'research' for counselling McLeod's (1999) questions seem very pertinent:

> ' How honest will a client be when interviewed by their counsellor for research purposes? To what extent can a client be critical of the counselling process?' (p84)

Another question, not asked by Mcleod, might be 'how honest might a client be when interviewed by their counsellor for *any* purpose and what might that honesty depend on? Webb & Wheeler's

(1998) research into the minimal levels of openness exhibited by counsellors in conversation with their supervisors, for example, is a study of a parallel process of collegial conversation that makes salutary reading.

In practice, I had to consider what my relationship to counsellor and researcher ethical codes and moral values was at each specific stage of this study and when and where these overlapped. In Parts One and Two of this study where the main voices are those of the scholar and the researcher, some of the detachment McLeod (1999) speaks of, seems wholly appropriate. I become increasingly attached, however, in Parts Three and Four as my practitioner-researcher and reflexive-researcher voices began to dominate. It was at these moments that I had to make decisions about involvement and representation.

I already had intimate relationships with all the research participants whose stories are recorded in part three. Etherington's (1996) dilemma, engaged in one-off interviews with strangers, about exploring feelings or challenging assumptions was not available to me, nor could I take the stand favoured by Hart & Crawford Wright (1999) to make choices about not entering dual relationships. Several participants in this study used the opportunity of taking part in the research conversations as a trigger for engaging in critical conversations about workplace events or for telling very personal stories. It would, I felt, have been disrespectful and unethical not to acknowledge, celebrate and, at times, act on these stories.

A useful tool in conducting ethical multi-storied research has been Richardson (1994) and Janesick's (2000) construct of crystallization, or many-sided, many storied, validity, as opposed to the traditional 'triangulation' model, although moments of triangulation inevitably occur within this framework. The crystal metaphor allows light to be refracted from many directions but does not aspire to one clear or true picture of reality:

> 'crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically we know more and doubt what we know' (Richardson, 1994, p522)

In this way the crystal metaphor has helped me to address the issues of non-maleficience and beneficence that underpin traditional professional ethics (Bond, 1998, 2000), particularly in

relation to partial, uncertain and fleeting knowledges that come into the light as I make ethical choices about methods, tools, techniques, styles, interpretations and representations.

Doing 'care-full', consultative research

Bond (1998), citing Beauchamp and Childress (1994), Wolcott (1994), Patton (1990) and McLeod (1994) posits a framework for consultative ethical decision-making in counselling research. I owe much of my understanding, albeit retrospective, of my ethical decision-making processes and of the centrality of ethical issues in this study, to this frame of reference.

In terms of the relationship between validity and confidentiality, for example, the extracts from initial conversations used to contextualize and focus the study have not been specifically credited to individuals. The nature and range of the group is made explicit, but the extracts of conversation are grouped thematically. This style and format seemed congruent with the exploratory nature of the conversations and was agreed with participants. In Part Two of this study all survey respondents remain anonymous, regardless of whether they had named themselves. This had, once again, been agreed with respondents at the outset. In Part Three of the study ethical decision-making about confidentiality was more complex.

Two of the participants expressed a clear desire to be given a pseudonym. In the interests of doing no harm to these two people, given the size and nature of the group, it became apparent that all participants would have to be given different names for the purposes of the study, even though they would be clearly identifiable at least to each other and possibly to other colleagues in the counselling world. This seems a rather half-hearted attempt at confidentiality, as this was identifiably a study of the University of Bristol counselling training programme, but was nonetheless a compromise with which all participants eventually became comfortable. Morag commented, in 1998:

> *' I was concerned to know how that would work, given that it is obvious we are 'the Bristol mob', but at least if I end up as counselling training's answer to 'the Gloria tapes' I shall be known as Morag, and not as me',*

and Lynn in 1999,

> *' I thought it was pretty absurd to give us pseudonyms, but then when I thought about you going to conferences, giving papers, getting published, well, I began to think, after a bit of time no-one will be sure who this is... and I felt rather relieved....'*

Another manifestation of non-maleficience, and indeed fidelity and authenticity, cited throughout the literature of research is 'informed consent', or more recently ongoing (McLeod, 1999, Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999, Etherington, 2000) or consultative/participatory (Lather, 1997, Bond, 1998) informed consent. How does this work in practice within an ongoing project when the researcher and the researched are all interconnected on a daily basis? How did my colleagues know when they were being researched and when we were having a conversation? Was there a difference? Are they still being researched nearly five years after the study commenced? It was clear, for instance, when the tape recorder was running that we were having a research conversation, but the extracts above, and others in this chapter are from subsequent conversations or written feedback about the research conversations, their interpretation, representation and their impact.

I made a commitment to participants, at the beginning of the study that nothing would be quoted in this text that had not been seen and agreed to by the participants concerned, hence the long and complex cycle of participation and validation illustrated by Table A, in Chapter Three. I was later to make a commitment, in the interests of non-maleficience and ongoing organisational dynamics, only to quote conversations or correspondence that related directly to this study and only to quote text that told the participants' own story, or that commented on their relationship with me. This sidestepped any potential use of my research project as a vehicle for covert communications on difficult issues between colleagues. All references to each other were removed. This seemed a basic tenet of group dynamics (Fineman, 1993, Douglas, 1995) and was both care-full and pragmatic ethical problem solving, given that we all had to work together both during and after this project.

The most glaring 'dual relationships' perhaps worth mentioning at the outset, were those with myself as both researcher, colleague and, in some cases, manager. There were occasions when

issues of status and authority clearly influenced the nature of the conversation, particularly with Clare for example, who had relatively recently been a student on a course I had directed and pronounced herself 'flattered' to be interviewed as it gave her an opportunity to develop a different relationship with me. Of the audiotapes I invited my research supervisor to listen to, the majority (Lynn, Grace, Trish, Donald) were pronounced collegial, conversational and colourful in tone, but those of some ex-students (Clare, Liz, James) were considered 'deferential' (Parsloe, 1998). My colleagues and myself had not noticed this deference, although these conversations did seem more tentative and less robust overall than those with more long-term colleagues.

My own listening to these tapes has led me to an understanding that the conversations contained more reserve and politeness in 'the responsive space between' (Bakhtin, 1986, Kvale, 1996) the interviewer and the interviewed which may have been caused by deference or perhaps by a stronger desire to maintain social distance or to minimalise and modify disagreement (Brown & Levinson, 1999) with the 'dominant discourses' of the interview (of which, more in Part Three).

Deference was not a major issue for most of my colleagues, although long-term relatedness and frankness was highly apparent. During the course of the audiotaped conversations, for instance, many of my colleagues appeared quite uninhibited in our interactions; Morag told me I was 'talking bollocks'; Nancy told me to 'fuck off'; Trish commented that I was 'getting steadily barmier' as this project progressed; Lynn commented two or three times that certain issues were 'typical of you' (Jane), bloody typical of you (Jane), or 'typifies the differences between us' and Dora suggested that I could:

> *'dither about all day around your 'research is a very good thing' kick, if you wanted... or we could have a decent conversation.... entirely up to you... I've got the afternoon off'.*

The examples cited above are by no means exhaustive and are quoted here merely to illustrate the importance of outlining the systemic and personal relationships that already existed within the research group. Research conversations that include deference, rudeness, frankness, intimacy, amusement or impatience, for example, are not invalid or insubstantial contributions as long as these issues are addressed and made as transparent as possible to both participants and readers. The

issues raised in researching within an interconnected grouping are complex, multifarious, and dealt with at some length in Parts Two and Three of this text (see also appendices two and three for contextualising data).

Bond (1998) suggests that the form of ongoing consultation, illustrated above, and throughout this text, takes its toll on the researcher rather than the participants, in comparison with pure forms of cooperative research. Ongoing consultation, I would suggest, can be demanding and intrusive for participants as well. Some people found the level of consultation valuable and rewarding and both Andy and Heather thanked me for the care I was taking with 'our' research in 1999. In 2000 Morag and Andy both maintained that they had felt pleased and privileged to be part of the 'process' of the project. Paul, however, began to wonder, as early as 1997 'did I consent to this degree of ongoing informed consent?' Grace noticed in 1998 that she had 'yet more unsolicited mail from Jane Speedy in the in-tray' and James wondered wryly, in 1998, whether he'd better 'give up my day-job to read all Jane's Ph.D. correspondence'.

As the study progressed and moved from 'transcript' to 'representation' it became increasingly the case that informed consent to text had more to do with authenticity of newly co-created meanings than fidelity to original meanings. In response to the texts in stanza form, Liz commented, in 1999:

> *'I was amazed I said that. I remembered saying those things, but I realised how far on I'd moved. I suppose your research has been part of that movement'.*

And in conversation about the whole experience, in 2000, Paul commented; -

> *' I was surprised by what you made of all that. Not surprised that you could do it, but surprised and pleased by what we had produced'.*

All of which leads us to consider beneficence, in terms of the 'taking part in the project' making a positive difference to participants. It also moves us into the realms of narrative ethics (Ellos, 1994, Frank, 1995, Josselson, 1996, Bar-On, 1996) of the privileging of stories co-created between researcher and participants and of the significance of re-telling and re-authoring stories, that became such a fundamental aspect of Part Three of this study. Thus, through a very brief exposition of decision-making about confidentiality and informed consent a plurality of ethical understandings and frames of reference is beginning to emerge.

Acknowledging Ethical Pluralities

I referred in Chapter Three to Denzin & Lincoln's (1994a, 2000a) description of the history of qualitative research in terms of seven overlapping, 'moments', traditional, modern, blurred genres, crises of representation, post-modern, post experimental and future moments.

None of these 'moments' would seem more correct or more appropriately privileged, but rather, either explicitly or implicitly:

' What is unethical is to present one category of activity as though it belongs to another' (Bond, 1998, p63).

Discussions about mixing methods in research often criticise the privileging of one particular aspect of the research conversation, crystal, triangle, maze or mixture that occurs (Brannen, 1992, McLeod, 1994, Deacon, et al, 1998, Janesick, 2000). This study is clearly and unashamedly privileging narrative ethics, ideas and practices and is written within a 'moment' and context that accepts that:

> 'now at the beginning of the 21st century, the narrative turn has been taken'
>
> (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a, p3)

Nonetheless, normative, descriptive and feminist/emancipatory ethical understandings also form part of the bricolage that emerges within this text. Thus, Part Two of this study and accompanying appendices are products of traditional/modern 'moments' upon the Denzin & Lincoln (2000a, pp 11-19) continua and are framed within an ethics of justice. They rely on the autonomy and distance of the researcher and the reliability and reduplicability of the data as evidence of the validity and integrity of both research and researcher (Reinharz, 1979, Brannen, 1992a,Wilson, 1996, Sapsford, 1999). Within the context of this study, this version of the story is clearly not posited as 'authoritative truth' but rather as 'part of the picture' that accepts the assumption that one can detect universality of meaning and that generalizing is a possible and legitimate research activity (Wampold & Poulin, 1992, Miles & Huberman, 1994, Cohen, 1994, Chatrand & Ellis, 1999).

The application and administration of the 'Strong Inventory' (Harmon et al., 1994), for example, (see appendix 2) does not rely in any way at any time on the presence, 'critical subjectivity' or

'political' positioning of the principal researcher. The fact that many participants found this inventory personally valuable, however, moved this aspect of the study out of a normative and into a descriptive/participatory ethical dimension, in that a research 'by-product' was to enrich and empower some of the participants (Price, 1999).

In Parts Two and Three of the study, structures agreed with participants about data collection and the presentation of personal stories and information about social networking and contexts are framed within 'moments' of blurred genres and crises of representation and exhibit an ethics of care and participation. These descriptive aspects of the inquiry privilege the voices of the participants or remain grounded in the data collected and rely on triangulation, acknowledged benefit to participants, and 'bracketing' or 'critical subjectivity' on the part of the researcher as indicators of validity, authenticity and integrity (Reason & Rowan, 1981, Reason, 1994, Rennie, 1992, West, 1995, 1996, McLeod, 1999, Bond, 1998, Etherington, 2000).

> 'research cycling is itself a fundamental discipline that leads toward critical subjectivity and a primary way of enhancing the validity of inquirers claims'
> (Heron & Reason, p284)

Several participants found the process of verifying transcripts personally and professionally valuable and gained greater insights into their own 'positions' in relation to counselling research as a result of these re-tellings.

Heather, for example, was so enthusiastic about the transforming nature of the experience that she asked to borrow the audiotapes of her interviews so that she could '*engage in some DIY interpersonal process recall and see where it gets me*'. The relationship between the personal stories of the participants and of the principal researcher and the final transcription of the core stories in 'stanza' form, however, carries over into narrative and feminist/emancipatory ethical frameworks.

In Part Three of the study, ethical decision-making about the transcription, representation and analysis of personal stories (Ochs, 1979, Mischler, 1991, Reissman, 1993, McLeod & Balamoutsou, 1996, Josselson, 1996) illustrates the multi-storied nature of the text. Stories, 'experience-near' (White, 1995, pp82-112) local knowledges, transformational knowledges and

co-creativity are privileged. The personal stories of the participants are privileged as narratives, 'and not merely as quarries from which to extract information' (Eakin, 1999, p26)

The voice of the wolf woman, ostensibly a fictional meta-narrator, can be seen as a fictionalised version within a 'layered account' that provides an opportunity to engage with stories in different ways that are less essentialist and may be more accessible to practitioners with a social/artistic bias than some other more 'academic' layers within the same account (Lather, 1997, Ronai, 1998,1999, Campbell, 2000).

The process and style of this project, in many ways transgressed some of my colleague's expectations of research. The unexpected outcome of a fundamental change in my own therapeutic practices also thoroughly transgressed my own expectations of the possibilities of research. The loss of autonomy or control over the creation of meaning within the narrative process has been transformational for this researcher in that, like Lather (1997) I have found myself both immersed in, and constituted by 'a text that is as much trying to write me as the other way round' (p41).

Thus, this text incorporates a plurality of ethical stances and practices and yet, there is an evident privileging of the narrative metaphor and of narrative ethics; an ethics of creativity, aesthetics and textuality (Ellos, 1994, Richardson, 1993, 2000a, 2000b, Denzin, 2000a) of attention and responsibility to stories (Frank, 1995, Abma, 1999) and to imagination and the significance of space and time, fact, fiction and poetry, myth and history (Mair, 1989, Gee, 1991, Freeman, 1998, Currie, 1998, Rinehart, 1998).

The chapter above, for example moves between what Freeman (1998) would describe as linear historical time (in that it appears towards the beginning of the study) and cyclical fictional/mythical time (in that it is clearly written retrospectively and includes an incomplete 'layered account' of conversations and events that took place 'in the future' of the project as illustrations of ethical dilemmas). It is a legitimate practice within fictional, poetic and 'research' writings to move through time and space in this way and to acknowledge that 'we possess the world we inhabit imaginatively as well as in fact' (Malouf, 1998, p35).

Richardson (2000b) has recently suggested five criteria by which to judge narrative research texts: that they make a substantive contribution to knowledge; are a piece of writing of aesthetic merit; demonstrate reflexivity and thus accountability; make an impact on the reader and express a

credible reality. This feels a daunting list and yet the validity of this, or any study must rest on the power of the text as it unfolds to capture the imagination, engage the curiosity and respect of readers and convince the audience of 'the transformational power of stories' (Josselson, 1996, px, quoting Bruner, 1986).

The relationship between ethics, aesthetics and methods was a theme that developed as this study progressed and became an increasingly central aspect of conversations about the role of research and obligations of researchers to make their work not only accessible, but also engaging.

An ethical issue that remained alive, rather than resolved, throughout this study was the inconsistent quality of the research stories within the text. Stories from a variety of 'moments' within the history of human science research are represented (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a), but the narratives and narrative interpretations and representations of other elements, such as surveys and cross-cultural comparisons were explicitly privileged. The trustworthiness and qualities of each particular research 'moment' visited within this study are described as the study progresses (Seale, 1999, 1999a) and the inconsistent or missing attention paid to 'all the competing claims for what constitutes good quality work' (Seale, 1999a, p 465) is explicitly acknowledged. The 'privileged' criteria, through which readers are asked to judge the entire project have already been made manifest, although they are perhaps more accurately viewed as 'work in progress' rather than exhaustive or definitive criteria. They have been distilled into diagrammatic form in Table C, (see below) which readers may wish to add to, or comment on.

I have adapted these criteria from Richardson's list, cited above, adding terms from other writers, particularly those concerned about 'methodological policing' (Denzin, 1997, 2000, Ellis, 2000, Bochner, 2001) and from Heron & Reason (1997), Lather (1991, 1997) and White (2000). It is not my contention that all elements of this study should meet all of these criteria. These criteria are not exhaustive. They encapsulate some of the ways of evaluating research studies that are emerging from narrative, feminist, emancipatory, participatory and creative researchers. This includes researchers telling self-stories, collecting life stories, experimenting with writing styles and producing 'transgressive' research from the 'margins'.

Table C: Criteria for evaluating creative/non-traditional research

1)	**Substantive contribution**	Contributes to our understanding of social/cultural life Demonstrates a deeply grounded human-world understanding and perspective Makes transparent the way this perspective has informed the construction of the text.
2)	**Aesthetic merit**	Succeeds aesthetically Uses creative practices that open up the text and invite interpretive responses The text is artistically shaped, satisfying and not boring
3)	**Reflexivity and participatory ethics**	How did the author come to write this text? How was the information gathered? Which community's interests does this text represent? Are ethical issues discussed? Does the contribution made outweigh the ethical dilemmas/pain for characters and readers? Is the separation of private and public spheres transgressed? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgements?
4)	**Impact**	Does this resonate with me? Does this affect me emotionally/intellectually? Does this generate new questions/move me to write? Move me to try new research practices? Move me to action? Transgress taken-for granted assumptions?

		Make a difference? Implement an emancipatory agenda?
5)	**Experience -near**	Does this text seem 'truthful'- a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the 'real'? Are claims to truth and knowledge embedded in multiple criteria that address issues of race, sex, culture class and lived experience.

(Jane Speedy, 2001, adapted from Richardson, 1993, Hertz, 1997, Lather, 1991, Lather & Smithies, 1997, Heron& Reason, 1997, Ronai, 1998, 1999, Josselson & Lieblich, 1999, White, 2000, Smith & Deemer, 2000, Denzin, Bochner, Ellis, Clough, Richardson, 2000, 2000a, 2000b, Bochner, 2001.)

Suffice it to say that any aspirations to contribute to the emancipatory research literature that 'changes the world' (Freire, 1982, 1998, hooks, 2000, Humphries, 2000, Humphries, et al, 2000, Mienczakowski, 2000,Ronai, 1998) remained rather conventional transgressions or local liberations in this case and within the realms of Mair's (1989) 'pretending towards', rather than achieving, emancipations.

Chapter Five: Conversational bones

Having established a working agreement, and introduced the cyclical model of informed consent described in Chapters Three and Four; I embarked upon a series of very loosely structured interviews, or conversations, with counsellor trainers in university settings about the nature, purposes and functions of their work. I did not have an 'initial research question' but rather a clear sense of the area I was researching, born of a conviction that both the central questions and focus would emerge as I immersed myself in conversation. I was overtly exploring, with my colleagues, the sort of areas that it would be useful for me to research. We did not form a human inquiry group in the 'formal' sense (Reason & Rowan, 1981) and geographically and financially were unlikely to be able to do so. These colleagues were, in a way, my initial 'advisory committee'.

I was scrupulous in my recognition and exposition of dual relationships, issues of confidentiality, ongoing processes of informed consent and, wherever possible, client-led investigation (Clarkson, 1995). It is fair to say, however, that I thought about it, briefly, first and then I 'just did it' (Punch, 1994, p95). I was familiar with the literature of research interviewing (more of which in Part Three), but in this instance, engaging in exploratory, tentative and unstructured conversations with people that I knew really well, this knowledge remained largely in the background. It was only later in this study, when I began experimenting with my interviewer 'positions' that I began to ponder more substantively upon the impact of my interviewer skills and expertise. For this initial investigation I tape-recorded conversations about counselling training. We talked about what interested us in our work, what concerned us, what we thought might need researching. My stance was warm, chatty, curious, questioning. These were conversations with my colleagues. I was making recordings of myself talking to my friends. This was more akin to what Mischler (1986) would describe as 'naturally occurring conversation' (p6) than formal research interviewing. I did not have a formal list of questions, nor was I the only speaker asking questions, and although the conversations were instigated by me and my research project was the primary agenda, the topic of :what is interesting about the work we do?, was of profound interest to all speakers.

I was not concerned with issues of veracity (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, pp1-7), nor was I affecting a deliberate interview style in order to tap particular kinds of knowledges (Kvale, 1996, pp38-57). Each conversation informed the others and my role was something like that of a group archivist. As such I had more and more to say for myself at the beginning of conversations, as I answered questions, and less and less to say as interviews progressed and I was doing the asking. The stories that emerged from these first explorations were characterised by both a random informality and a thematic uniformity.

Random informality

The group of six interviewees was selected happenstantially, although they met my four core criteria of being integrative trainers with core person-centred values who worked, or had worked, in university settings on BAC accredited courses, training professional counsellors. The conversations were completely unstructured, apart from an (almost uniformly ignored) checklist of 'topics for discussion' that was explicitly being created and added to as the interviews went on.

My first interview was with one of the most experienced counselling educators and trainers in the country. She had herself worked at another university at one time and had been instrumental in the creation and evolution of the BAC accreditation procedures. The rich 'distillation' of experience that she had to offer seemed a good place to start. I subsequently consulted my most experienced colleague at the University of Bristol and both the most established and the very newest of our diploma tutors. Finally I interviewed an established colleague from another university and an experienced counselling trainer and educator who was about to commence working full-time in yet another university setting.

Apart from starting very deliberately with my first two interviewees, the order and selection of this group was entirely haphazard. It nevertheless reflects a useful spread of ages, stages, genders, backgrounds and sexual orientations. Three came from more middle-class families of origin, whereas the other half of the group had strongly working class roots and had all been the first person in their family to go to university. This second group had much to say about the complicated mixture of pride and insecurity that working in a university environment evoked in them. All three anticipated being 'found out' or 'found wanting' in some way: 'Achilles

syndrome' (Clarkson, 1994) feelings shared by many of the students on their courses (Battye, 1991, Maybank, 1998, Parker, 1998).

The group ranged in age from their mid-thirties to late seventies, and included two people in their forties and two in their fifties. All of them worked as counsellors, trainers and supervisors, although the balance and emphasis between these areas was different for each of them. Three of them were in full-time employment in one institution, two were part-time 'salaried' and part-time freelance, one worked purely in a freelance capacity. Their experience in professional counsellor education and training ranged from one to thirty years.

Apart from asking them all, prior to our conversations, to fill in information sheets disclosing most of the details above, the research process remained as informal and collegial as possible. I asked permission to tape the interviews and gave a clear undertaking to show all participants anything I was going to use in my study. As it transpired, although I was to listen to these initial conversations over and over again, I never actually transcribed them. I used the tapes as the basis for decision-making about my specific research topic, kept the group informed about the nature of the project, and then sent them all copies of the final synthesis for comment.

I started all the conversations with a statement like:

"I'm interested in what's important for you about your work as a trainer, about what it means to you." During the course of all the conversations I said (something like) "If you were employing me as your researcher, what aspect of counselling education and training would you like me to explore?"

Each conversation meandered along routes mainly initiated by the participant, rather than the researcher. I did accumulate a checklist of:

- Purpose/ meaning
- Functions/ preferences
- Context (i.e. university)
- Profession (i.e. counselling and counselling training).

I interviewed the least experienced trainers last and referred to the checklist at times with them, the rest of the group covered most of these topics spontaneously. My role was to provide an

appropriate conversational climate and to refer to previous interviews as part of our shared knowledge base. I wanted to create the potential for participation in this endeavour by sharing information and enabling each conversation to enrich its successor.

Thematic uniformity

Most of our discussion, in all these interviews, revolved around the microclimate of relationships with trainee counsellors and the business of 'being in the training group'. Purpose, satisfaction and meaning were achieved 'in relationship'.

People commented:

> *"That's what its all about. Those moments of contact with the students".*
>
> *"Our purpose is to produce good one-to-one counsellors, and our only loyalty should be to their future clients".*
>
> *"Being in the group, over time, witnessing and enabling, that's our strength of purpose as experiential educators".*
>
> *"I get the greatest buzz, a sense of purpose I suppose, out of using my antennae. Out of noticing what is not said, and saying it, or better still encouraging others to notice and say it".*

More was said about interpersonal interactions than anything else, about moments of 'psychological contact' and 'relational depth' with trainees in particular. Much has been written recently about the content and process of professional counsellor training in Britain (see: BAC 1988, 1995, 1996, Dryden & Thorne 1991, Dryden, 1991, Clarkson, 1992, Connor, 1994, Dryden & Feltham 1994, Dryden, Horton & Mearns 1995, Charlton 1996, Inskipp 1996, Johns 1996, Wheeler, 1996, Bayne, Horton and Bimrose 1996, Mearns 1997, Johns 1998, of which Dryden et al., 1995, probably most usefully describes the current consensus) which can only be touched on here, in the context of these conversations.

There was considerable interest from my colleagues in the many tasks and functions of counsellor trainers, and of individual knowledge, preferences and skills. Mearns (1997, p58) usefully cites ten person-centred 'trainer abilities'; the ability to work fluidly with open process, non-defensiveness, transparency, empathy, unconditional positive regard, not taking responsibility *for*

the group members, being responsible *to* the group members, linking theory with practice, expertise as a demonstrator, expertise as a facilitator. This group of interviewees, integrative trainers with a core person-centred approach, would add to Mearns' list: expertise as assessor, expertise (for some) as manager and/or supervisor, not taking responsibility *for* the co-tutor or the institution, being responsible *to* and *with* the co-tutors and the institution and linking practice with theory.

" I'm interested in the many selves available to me as a trainer... the difference, between my community group facilitator, my skills group trainer, my teacher, imparting and sharing knowledge".

" I'm not really a teacher, I didn't train as a teacher, I'm a good practitioner demonstrator, I'm a really good counsellor, that's my selling point".

" I love the teaching best, that moment when the group is in the palm of your hand, I'm probably not supposed to say that, but that's what makes it worthwhile for me, the performance high".

All the interviewees adhered to, and mentioned, the BAC code of ethics and practice for trainers (BAC, 1995). They had wide accumulated experience of co-tutoring and had an interest in the complex issues beneath these codes, so eloquently summarised by Thomas, (1998):

> 'Co-tutoring.... is a source both of great reward and of great stress.... I have found my relationships with co-tutors to be as complex as my primary family relationships, and they have required just as much time and attention if the working partnership is to be enjoyable and productive. It is impossible to cut corners on this.'p25.

"I am increasingly a manager, with a responsibility towards the 'psychological health' of the tutor team as well as the students".

"The co-tutoring - its a bit like a marriage. Even the most stable of relationships has to cope with the occasional 'bad hair day' and its repercussions. Let alone all the thorny issues of jealousy, competition, attraction etc.... and how transparent to make them".

"Its a laugh working with 'x', we have a lot of fun, but we don't really talk about working together. I sometimes worry about that... what difference it might make"

The main focus of these conversations, particularly in terms of 'what I might research', was on the training process and the interpersonal dynamics of counselling training.

On the 'rich and multi-layered network of interpersonal communications which form the environment in which the group task occurs' (Thomas, 1998a, p96):

"It's those electric light bulb moments that are crucial, when the group could go either way, and you direct them to the available switches, and hold your breath".

"I'm interested in 'how change occurs' in counselling training. Is it the same, or different, than in counselling?".

"There are moments when the whole culture suddenly shifts, sometimes this is a 'time and tide' issue, the group have come back from their summer break... and it's like going from primary to secondary school, everybody seems taller; sometimes it happens 'in the moment', I wonder how... is it because of a particular intervention, is it because the trainers managed to shut up for five minutes? Fascinating stuff!".

There was an enormous richness of material here. I was already 'spoilt for choice' as a researcher. I considered continuing with the work that I, and others, had already started (Proctor, 1991, Speedy, 1993 & 1998b, Mearns, 1997) exploring trainer abilities, roles, functions and archetypes. I began to contemplate researching perceptions of 'moments of change' or 'moments of contact' in the training group, using IPR (interpersonal process recall, see Elliott, 1986) with trainers and trainees alike to compare these perceptions to the work already conducted in counselling settings by Mahrer (1996) on 'impressive moments' in psychotherapy and Grafanaki and McLeod (1995) on 'helpful and hindering events' in counselling. I also began to be acutely aware of an unexpected imbalance in the theme of these conversations. Counselling as a 'social process' (Dowd, 1998, McLeod, 1999a) was clearly not a central issue or theme for any of my interviewees.

Creative incubation

Shortly after the last of these conversations my mother died. This very unexpected life event brought my research to a halt for the next six months, during which time I looked after my father,

my daughter and myself. I made the six hour round trip to and from my father's home every other weekend for six months. I drove at night, and to keep myself awake, I played these tapes. I did not really consider that I was listening to them in any meaningful way. Then an imbalance began to emerge that I had neither encouraged, predicted nor tried to avoid. I became intrigued by the enormous weight placed on the micro-, rather than macro-climate of counselling training in these conversations.

I did not conduct a very rigorous comparative analysis of the tapes and such comparisons I have made have been validated only by my own observations. This was fairly 'rule of thumb' quantitative research and no doubt another listener might categorise differently and reach different conclusions. The discrepancy was so glaring, however, that it would have been impossible not to notice to some degree.

I noted that out of the eight hours and thirty nine minutes of conversation, six hours and twenty three minutes were devoted to discussing the issues outlined above, issues located in the micro-climate of the relationships and interactions in the groups with trainees and fellow tutors. Out of the remaining two hours and twenty three minutes spent discussing the macro-climates of the university, of the counselling profession in Britain and the wider world of politics and society, one hour and forty three minutes were from the conversations with the two most experienced trainers in the group. My remaining four colleagues, therefore, spent forty minutes between them, an average of ten minutes each, contextualizing their work.

I was disappointed to discover the emergence of this potentially individualistic attitude to counsellor education. Our skill, as counsellors, in attending to 'particular experience' seems to have overwhelmed other considerations. It appeared from the conversations that counselling relationships and training communities existed almost in isolation with little or no socio-cultural or political context. There have been several recent critiques of apolitical 'by-standing' in counselling, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy (Thorne, 1995, Kearney, 1996, Clarkson, 1996) but I did not expect this from my colleagues or myself:

> 'It is almost certainly true that, at least in the U.K., most counselling training pays little attention to contextual issues. Within college - and institute- based

courses, the training of counsellors and psychotherapists is usually generic rather than focused on settings' (McLeod & Machin , 1998 p333).

I found the apparent absence of interest in 'context' all the more disquieting in my colleagues at the University of Bristol whose model of counselling training is embedded within a systemic framework (Egan & Cowan, 1979, Egan, 1984, Johns, 1989, Speedy, 1997).

I was curious to know more about this phenomenon, about whether my style of conversation had somehow skewed people's responses, or whether there was something endemically individualistic in the culture of counselling. I became curious about the connections between humanistic values, systems theories and individualism. I wondered whether the call by many narrative therapists for us to abandon systemic traditions in favour of connected and overlapping stories (Anderson, et al., 1986, White & Epston, 1990, Freedman & Combs, 1996) might have some validity. As I come to write this study up, three years later, I am aware of McLeod & Machin's (1998) recent call for more research into the contextualizing of counselling. This study was to become one such contribution to the literature of counselling training.

Contextualizing training and education: 1: The university

In so far as the context of the university made an impact on people, or not, it often did so in terms of their own individual career or personal portfolios:

"I suppose it makes a difference to my status, I use the fact that the university employs me, as a PR pointer for this organisation".

"I'm just a jobbing practitioner/trainer, I could be working anywhere, the university has nothing to do with me whatsoever".

"I quite like the idea of working at a university, or at least, I quite like the idea of my dad and mum liking the idea".

The university was seen, in the main, as quite a separate and different entity, with different values and purposes, from the "micro bubble" of counsellor training. The managers of the counselling programmes were seen by both themselves and their colleagues as somehow bridging this interface:

"I'm pleased I'm not you or 'x'. I'm pleased that you deal with the system, with 'them' and I can come in and get on with what I am really good at".

"They don't know anything about what we do, they 'host' our courses and, I suppose, think we are weird".

"Part of my role is at the interface between the university and the unit, a sort of Janus' head".

"You have created a sort of micro bubble, a particular climate. The course tutors shelter beneath a sort of semi-permeable membrane".

It was not that surprising a discovery that many of my colleagues felt very separate and different from the universities, which they frequently referred to as the 'host' communities in which their courses were taught. This sense of alienation has been frequently documented in the literature of counselling, not least in Rogers' accounts of the development of his centre at the University of Chicago in the 1940's (1978). Indeed, in re-reading Rogers' description of the 'politics of administration' (ibid, pp90-105) alongside more current British accounts (Dryden 1991, Wolfe & Berry, 1997, Johns, 1998, Feltham, 1998) it would seem that little has changed in the intervening 50 years, or in the 'transatlantic' translation.

Contextualizing training and education: 2: The counselling profession.

In Britain, the relatively new profession of counselling has undergone a period of accelerated expansion and recognition over the last twenty years. In 1978 Proctor was asking: 'Should counselling become a profession?'(1978, p11). By 1991 Dryden, writing retrospectively, claimed that counselling had come of age by 1985 and that 'it is only comparatively recently that the notion of a counselling profession as such has gained widespread acceptance' (1991 p1). By 1997 Baron was claiming that the BAC management committee's decision to 'actively support counselling as a profession' (Baron, 1997, p16) in 1993 had heralded a 'new direction' and by 1998, Johns was balancing the costs and benefits of 'the apparently relentless juggernaut of professionalisation' (Johns, 1998b, p217).

All the interviewees were aware of 'professionalisation' and had a range of views about it, although only the first two commented on their active involvement in professional organisations:

"The establishment of standards and ethics has been central really. I am proud of the BAC accreditation of courses, proud to be part of that".

"I am not a great committee joiner, but I have felt a responsibility to play my part in developments and share my know-how".

"There are now people who belong and people who do not... that's inevitable with this professionalisation process... the BAC has also become a gatekeeper".

"I'm not really part of all that, I suppose I have benefited, I'm not sure really. There doesn't seem to be much evidence that the clients get a better deal now we're all so professional and over-qualified".

"It brings respectability, perhaps power, maybe even money... I'm no better at what I do, of course".

"And the losses? Oh I don't know... street-cred? A loss of innocence perhaps".

There seemed a degree of tension in all participants between a pride and sense of reputation in being associated with accreditation, and a loss of either a pioneering or maverick spirit.

Respectability has brought losses as well as gains to this group. Counselling and psychotherapy had emerged, at least in part, as a service to those who were discontented with the mainstream societal and organisational structures and mores of the 1950's and 1960's (Watkins, Drury & Preddy 1992,):

> 'A new counter-culture began to emerge - one based on ideals and values that gave greater priority to the development of the individual within the community, to personal relationships, and to the protection of the environment' (p44).

The coming of age, cited by Dryden (1991) had brought with it a mainstreaming and professionalising of 'counter cultural services', the irony of which was not lost on my group of interviewees.

"Reputation, Reputation. Oh Iago! My reputation's gone! Does all this accreditation make me less adventurous, I wonder. I hope not... but it may come".

There have recently been some cogent arguments against accreditation, registration and professionalisation (Mowbray, 1995, House & Totton, 1997). Indeed, House and Totton's

telling account of the 'politics' of getting published (ibid, pp7-8) makes interesting reading. These arguments, however, are all situated within the established discourse of 'the professions' and revolve around appropriate versions of ethics, accountability and trustworthiness (Wasdell, 1990, Mowbray, 1995, Totton, 1997).

In offering a synthesis of traditional and emerging patterns of professional practices in the United Kingdom, Watkins, Drury and Preddy (1992) summarise with:

> 'autonomy, trust relationships, and agreed standards of performance and behaviour are pinpointed as three key characteristics which form the foundations of professional culture and identity'(p.15).

The culture of counselling as a profession seems a key contextualizing issue for those training professional counsellors. A sense of alienation from the university as a system seemed a familiar pattern in the world of counselling education and, possibly, professional and vocational education per se (Taylor, 1997). A dearth of passion around, or even position about, these very current debates on the part of my interviewees seemed rather surprising, to me at least.

Contextualizing training and education: 3: The wider world.

Those participants who did have something to say about the wider 'politics' of counselling had very powerful and potent views:

> *"We must surely place our work in the context of human ecology in the widest sense, of political and spiritual interconnectedness".*

> *"It's important to be clear about the purpose. Is this all just for self-development, for counsellors and their clients, or is this part of a more connected society, of a quiet revolution. If it isn't, we are just producing what 'x' would call the 'little monster syndrome'. Creating people obsessed with their own potential".*

> *"This whole thing is political. The way this service, or counselling per se relies on funding fashions, media coverage, how the public views HIV, etc".*

These views, although from a minority of the group I interviewed, are reflected in a substantial body of recent critical literature within the counselling field (see, for example, Smail, 1987and 1997, Hillman & Ventura, 1992, Dryden & Feltham, 1992, Kearney, 1996, Clarkson, 1996,

Pilgrim, 1997, Thorne, 1997, 1997a, Samuels, 1997, Johns, 1997 &1998). Smail (1997) protests that 'psychotherapy lives in a world of its own' (159) and Johns (1997) positioning the 'person' of the counsellor in the political, economic and spiritual context of the approaching end of the twentieth century, asks:

'How can counsellors and psychotherapists be unaffected by such bewildering forces of change and uncertainty and by the struggle to manage the range of personal conflicts engendered by [them] all?'(p56)

How indeed? I was beginning to speculate about the general lack of interest in context and in social and political responsibility on the one hand, and the passionately 'political' statements outlined above. What lay beneath these differences? How might I investigate this? How might my research develop, as McLeod & Machin (19898) suggest 'the concepts and tools through which context can be measured, deconstructed and explained' (p335). As I pondered upon all of this, some comments made earlier, by one of my colleagues at Bristol, started going round and round in my head like a mantra or a stanza from a poem:

"using my antennae
noticing what is not said,
and saying it.
Or better still
encouraging others
to notice and say it".

Counselling research: A gaping void.

In the period following my mother's death, I was very conscious of absences and of things left unsaid. I became fiercely aware of what was not being mentioned in these conversations. The absolute neglect of counselling research and publications suddenly struck me. The small 'sample' of colleagues who took part in these initial conversations exhibited neither the hostility to research anticipated by some contemporary writers (Shipton, 1994) nor the enthusiasm experienced by others (Crouan, 1994, Ross, 1994, Grafanaki, 1996). They were completely silent on the subject.

There was no mention by anyone about the role of counselling researchers or writers and counselling research and publications in the education and training of counsellors. Counselling research had most definitely been on the agenda of counselling as a profession for some years

(Dryden, 1991, Dryden, 1994, McLeod, 1994, Hicks & Wheeler 1994). Some of these colleagues were established authors; others had been engaged in both counselling research and the teaching of counselling research. Nevertheless, they all omitted research and researchers from their discussion of the functions, contexts, purposes and abilities of counselling trainers and educators. They had all, during the course of our conversations, talked about the different roles, tasks and functions for counselling trainers. Some had commented on the roles they found less easy, such as assessor, examiner or staff manager. Comments about the role of researcher, or reader of counselling research, were not unfavourable, they were non-existent. This did not seem so much like a research-practice gap (of which, more later) as a gaping void.

The three of my colleagues who were from the University of Bristol were engaged as full or part-time tutors at one of Britain's leading international research universities, and were surrounded in their working lives by research-active academics from other disciplines engaged in a furious flurry of research activity spurred on by the University Funding council (UFC) / Higher education funding council of England (HEFCE) led Research Assessment Exercise (University of Bristol 1997 and 1998). The other three participants were presumably being bombarded daily by the counselling publications boom, and were witnessing regular research discussions and papers in the counselling journals.

I wanted to explore these issues and attitudes further, but equally to influence and challenge my colleagues in ways that might lead us towards a different, more contextualised and more research-positive climate. In so doing, I began to discover and uncover different ways of researching, partly by trawling the literature of research, but equally by listening to these initial 'research conversations' again and again. I began to wonder whether this lack of interest in research was connected with the 'individualistic' tendency I had noticed. I began to realise that we had well integrated and interdependent models of counselling, training and supervision at the University of Bristol, but models and styles of researching seemed to be 'add-ons' in our programme, rather than integral, or central to it.

Ironically, just as I was becoming clearer about the nature of this study, the University of Bristol was becoming clearer about political and organisational changes that were going to place the counselling unit 'under new management'. Proposed relocation in the Graduate School of Education brought with it a very clear message that we were becoming part of a department with:

'a very strong research culture' (Furlong 1997). It seemed pertinent to narrow the central focus of this study to the relationship between counselling education and training and counselling research. A study of the ways people constructed research would surely, inevitably, situate the work we did at Bristol in its wider professional, organisational and socio-cultural context. How could it not?

At The Mouth Of The Cave.

La Loba sat back and, leaning against the wall of the cave, rolled herself a long thin dark brown cigarette. There was much that remained unsaid. Much that had been said was beginning to unravel. The neatly stacked piles were already beginning to disintegrate and merge into each other.

She inhaled deeply and arching her neck right back, blew slow, somnolent smoke rings out into the darkening, desert sky. She was a woman with a passion for wolves. She had spent years scrutinizing wolves, their smells, colours, qualities, habits and habitats. She had a feeling for wolves and for the language and movements of wolves. She engaged with wolves differently and more gracefully than she engaged with humans. She had learned that no translations were required, no collapsing of languages the one into the other. She had long since moved into an everyday and different relationship with wolves:

Translation was never possible.
Instead there was always only
Conquest, the influx
Of the language of either/or,
The one language
That has eaten all the others

(Margaret Atwood, 1986)

The second part of this study is the shortest section, but is nonetheless a key, contextualising element of the project. It is concerned with the search for the cultural bones of research and practice within the context of the professional domain of counselling in Britain and counsellor education at the University of Bristol. The narration, established by my scholar's voice in Part One, is taken up by the investigative researcher in Part Two. In Chapter Six, the researcher's voice comes to the fore, explores the literature of research-practice gaps with a critical eye and speculates about its construction. Appendices One, Two and Three, referred to periodically throughout parts two and three of this study, offer further contextualising data in the form of a survey of counsellor educators in Britain and background information about the counsellor educators at the University of Bristol and their interrelationships.

It is difficult to know how best to contextualize a 'silence' about issues of research. In conversational terms silence might denote lack of interest, politeness or awe (Brown, et al., 1988) or things 'unsaid' and unsayable (Rogers, et al.,1999). There is not, unsurprisingly, a significant literature of silence about research. Much has been said about the 'research –practice' gap, however, that may be worth exploring. This 'gap' is a fairly recent, but determined and well-embedded arrival in the U.K. although it has not been a 'universal ' or inevitable phenomenon in the history of therapeutic endeavours.

Freud (1963) was convinced that it was 'one of the distinctions of psychoanalysis that research and treatment proceed hand in hand' (p120) since which time, Kvale (1999) argues there has been a 'philosophical re-shaping of knowledge production' (pp89-105) that has militated against therapeutic interviews being regarded as legitimate sites for human science research. In the pioneering heyday of person-centred counselling research, Rogers and his team (see: Rogers, 1957,1963,1975, Rogers et al., 1967, Rogers & Stevens, 1967, Truax & Carkuff, 1967, Cohen, 1997, Barrett-Lennard, 1998, for an insight into this body of work) formed what might retrospectively have been described as a 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998) wherein a range of stakeholders in the community were able to integrate aspects of university teaching, work with clients, research and writing throughout their careers. This integration has been depicted as giving their research ' a high degree of coherence and impact' by, McLeod, (1998), who goes on to argue that this may be less possible to achieve in the current climate. We must assume this refers to 'currency' within the mainstream British context since in Australia and New Zealand there has

been a great burgeoning of communities of practice (Waldegrave, 1990, Monk, et al, 1997, Tamasase, et al, 1998) and of a contemporary literature exploring narrative therapeutic practices as 'co-research' into people's lives (Epston, 1999, White, 2000, Bird, 2000).

McLeod (2001) argues that periods of collective endeavour such as these correspond with periods of evolution and growth in the therapeutic domain and are subject to the excitements, limitations and hazards of groups of people working together within the same 'school'. I am curious about the current separation of researcher and practitioner identities and ways in which this separation impacts on professional culture.

Freud (1963) constructed therapy and research practices as a 'hand in hand' endeavour,

but his successors have yet to develop a repertoire of research genres featuring therapeutic conversation as the 'production site' for insights into the human condition. Rogers (Barrett-Lennard, op cit) embraced the random control trial as the dominant research discourse of his day. Nonetheless, in the wake of 'on personal power' (Rogers, 1978) and 'freedom to learn' (Rogers, 1983), one might have imagined the advocates of person-centred counselling research promoting participative, transgressive, feminist and emancipatory research frame works. Indeed, some of Roger's heirs have advocated and conducted studies focussed on client recall, the in-therapy agency of clients (Rennie, 1994a, 2001, Grafanaki & McLeod, 1999) and collaborative participative research (Mearns & McLeod, 1984) but a 'community of practice' has not yet emerged.

Counselling in Britain has already been described as a multi-disciplinary profession (Thorne & Dryden, 1993), constituted very differently and divergently from mainstream North American counselling psychology. In Part One of this study I identified the beginning of the twenty-first century as a 'moment' holding the potential for a rich mix of research genres to emerge and burst onto the counselling field. Somehow post-war therapeutic research and practice appeared to have been hi-jacked, particularly in the United States, by the relentless progress of 'mainstream psychology' that had transformed itself from: 'An emerging academic specialty into a mammoth techno scientific profession in less than a century' (Capshew, 1999, p5).

The literature of the research-practice gap, imported wholesale from the United States, lies very much within the tradition of mainstream psychology. Having established itself in a central way in

the discourse of the profession and travelled to Britain, it took root. As this study began, the origins of this 'gap' were still being explicitly named (Wheeler & Hicks, 1994, Wheeler & McLeod, 1994, Mcleod, 1994), but by 2001 the 'gap' had become a well known fact that needed no further exploration, since: 'the gap between research and practice has been endlessly well documented' (Bond, 2001).

This aspect of the study is principally narrated by the 'researcher', and written, particularly in the first part of Chapter Six, in imitation of North American mainstream psychology researchers and their style of referencing. Referencing is itself a form of storytelling, moving back and forth across the landscapes of history, discipline and genre, highlighting moments that sustain, capture the attention or trouble the certainties of particular authors. A certain genre of academic social science writing, mainstream psychology in particular, has a tradition of introducing all new elements within the discourse or that point to a 'body of work' with what Czarniawska (1998) describes as 'shopping list' (pp58-63) referencing. This style of referencing has the intention of situating the text for the reader but also tacitly nods at the convention of 'the more references the better.' Many readers find themselves interrupted and distracted by the shopping lists. To quote Dora, one of my colleagues who participated in the conversations in part three of this study, commented on 'bad academic writing' :

> *'they pepper their writing with references as if somehow this placed their arguments nearer the truth or closer to god. For myself, I cannot stand those roll calls of names...it's like trying to read on a station platform'.*

I have tried as much as possible to resist the use of such shopping lists, except when I am referring to a body of knowledge that is more extensively rehearsed elsewhere and that I am only hinting at in this text (such as the sections on professionalism and the academy in the introduction, or person-centred research traditions discussed above). The North American literature of the research-practice gap, however, is an extreme example of the shopping list style and I have therefore tried to reproduce it here (in one short section) as a contrast to other literatures and styles of writing. I suspect that it may speak volumes about the numbers of North American counselling psychologists who lose all interest in publishing their work. For myself, I am curious about a professional culture that has adopted such a 'quantitative' regime of truth around referencing. I

hope I have reproduced this style with conviction. It was immensely hard, and uninspiring, to write.

I was curious about this gap, how it was constructed, by whom and with what purposes? Was it an unintentional consequence of some other process? Was it part of the professional maturation and theoretical fragmentation process? Had particular circumstances shaped the gap, if any, in Britain, or in Bristol? I had a major interest in this gap and wondered whether it afforded me any opportunities. Perhaps it was time to turn a curious anthropological gaze towards this gap, to 'make the familiar unfamiliar' and attempt to describe our own cultural practices of research, counselling practice and the 'gaps' between them. Research and counselling are both practices stemming from particular sets of ideas, they are both situated in specific contexts. The size and shape of the gap is presumably flexible and dependent on definitions of research and researcher identities and on what constitutes clinical practice at any given moment.

Chapter Six : The gap between the bones

There is an extensive literature of research-practice gaps. It is a gap with well-documented parallels amongst the other British helping professions of nursing (Davies, 1996, Abbott & Sapsford, 1998), social work (Hart & Bond, 1995, Taylor, 1997) and teaching (Hargreaves, 1996, Bassey, 1998). I would like to set aside for the moment the possibility that such a gap is a given requirement of all established and emergent professions and is the inevitable consequence of the tensions inherent in their relationship with the academy, as explored in Part One. I intend briefly to chart the history of this gap, current British constructs of the gap and any concurrent suggested remedies. I do not wish to imply by my tone here that this gap does or does not exist, but rather, that there was clearly a time when it was unheard of. It is currently 'common knowledge' and it is worth exploring the story behind this reconfiguration. This story may offer some clues or, at least, a socio-cultural context to the complete silence exhibited by my colleagues on the subject of research and researchers. Contextualising data about the current performance of this gap, both within Britain and within the university of Bristol are provided in Appendices One to Three.

Constructing the gap

The gap between counselling research and practice originated in North America and was being named by the mid 20th century (Kelly & Goldberg, 1959, Levy, 1962). There are numerous studies from the fields of counselling psychology, counselling and psychotherapy in the United States, documenting practitioner reluctance to engage in research (Norcross, Prochaska & Gallagher, 1989), to read research (Morrow-Bradley & Elliot, 1986), to use research to inform practice (Cohen, Sergeant & Sechrest, 1986, Marten and Hiembert, 1995, Sexton & Whiston, 1996) or combinations of these factors (Cohen, et al., 1986, Strupp, 1989, Watkins & Schneider , 1991, Heppner, et al., 1992, Richardson, 1997.) The assumptions underlying the construction of research and practice in this literature are not always made explicit, but can best be surmised from the identifying features 'evidenced' within the gap.

Research 'productivity'

There is a robust literature identifying gaps between the expectations of research training and the outcomes for research trainees and between research training environments and expected outcomes in terms of publications and productivity (Howard, 1985, O'Brien, 1995, Gelso, 1979, Gelso, et al., 1983, Royalty & Magoon, 1985, Galassi, et al.,1986, Heppner, et al.,1987, Mallinckdrodt, et al., 1990, Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992, Kahn & Gelso, 1997, Kahn & Scott, 1997, Mallinckrodt, 1997, Hill, 1997, Bowman 1997 and Betz 1997). Studies of North American counselling training programmes have consistently expressed concern about graduate productivity in terms of publications and presentations (Gelso, et al., 1983, O'Brien, 1995, Brown, et al., 1996, Kahn & Scott, 1997, Hill, 1997). There is also a burgeoning literature encouraging students, particularly practitioner researchers and women, who are underrepresented in publications but not in student populations to present and publish their work (Hill, 1997).

Research training

Whether 'productivity' is a legitimate goal or not there does seem to be a general consensus about the factors ascribed to creative and successful research training environments for counselling psychologists by providers and researchers, if not by consumers. These factors comprise early experiences of research activity (Royalty, et al., 1986, Galassi, et al., 1986, Heppner, et al., 1987, Gelso, et al., 1988, O'Brien, 1991, Gelso, 1993, Gelso, et. al, 1996, Mahrer, 1996, Strupp, 1996, Kahn, et al., 1997) committed involvement and modelling by 'faculty members' and a sense of interpersonal community (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, Mallinckrodt, et al., 1990, O' Brien, K, 1995, Bruce 1995, Hill, 1997, Bowman, 1997, Betz, 1997) and the establishment of research environments conducive to the demographic make-up and personality types of practitioners in training (Holland, 1973, 1985, 1986, Holland, et al., 1994, Mallinckdrodt, et al., 1990, Ryan, et al., 1996, Brown, et al., 1996, Kahn & Gelso, 1997, Kahn & Scott, 1997, Mallinckdrodt, 1997).

Gender, age and identity

There are also repeated findings in the United States that the earlier in their counselling careers that trainees engage in some form of research training and the earlier they realise that all research studies are 'flawed' and incomplete, the more committed they are to engaging in research

themselves (Gelso, et al., 1983, Gelso, et al., 1996, Kahn and Scott, 1997). Speculation that people completing their doctoral training at a younger age produce a greater and more noteworthy contribution to counselling research (Royalty & Magoon, 1985, Phillips & Russell, 1994) bodes ill for Bristol and, I suspect, for Britain. This is the second doctoral thesis to emerge from the counselling programme at the University of Bristol, although there is now a small group of higher degree students and plans for a taught doctorate (more of which in Part Four). The average age of the counsellor educators who were participants in this study is 53. At the University of Bristol, the average age of students entering initial counsellor training is 42, the average age of master's students 49, and the gender ratio is 70 to 30 (women to men) (Continuing Education Coordination of Administration and Statistics, CECAS, 2000).

Hill, (1997) Bruce (1995) and Bowman (1997) all comment on the importance of interactive opportunities with peers and tutors, and of the importance of positive modelling, particularly from women tutors. The female students, who are in the majority, 'look to the women as role models' (Bruce, 1995, p145). There seems considerable agreement amongst American counselling research trainers (Mallinckdrodt, et al., 1990, O'Brien, 1995, Kahn & Scott and Kahn & Gelso, 1997) that the most successful and productive research training institutions are those where faculty members themselves enthusiastically engage in research. Hill (1997) qualifies this with a call for balanced training environments that support practitioners and researchers alike. She ponders upon the roles of serendipity and happenstance in the careers of women academics and reminds us of the scarcity of employment opportunities in the research world.

Separate identity claims and possible solutions

In the United States at least, researchers and practitioners are increasingly regarded as two separate species and these 'irresolvable polarities' (Watkins & Schneider, 1991, p291) have been extensively documented over the last twenty years (Bergin & Strupp, 1972, 1986, Goldstein, 1982, Woolsey, 1986, Mahrer, 1989, 1996, Watkins & Schneider, 1991) and Goldfried & Wolfe (1996, p1007) advocate 'repairing a strained relationship'.

Some condone a continuation of this division and advocate differential doctoral training programmes for practitioners and researchers (Zimpfer, et al., 1997) and criticise the ethical

complexity of dual practitioner/researcher relationships, whilst others call for an integration of research, theory and practice (Howard, 1985, Sexton & Whiston, 1996).

The literature identifies academic researchers working in universities as the primary authors of the 'gap' story. Some of the research has been conducted 'on' psychotherapy, counselling psychology and counselling practitioners, amongst fairly large 'samples' (Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986). It has been conducted in ways that model almost exclusively 'traditional' research methodologies, through survey questionnaires and structured interviews (Cohen, Sergeant & Sechrest, 1986). An immense amount of research has been conducted with students in training and research training environments where research is associated with scientist practitioner models or doctoral programmes (Meier, 1999) and is being conducted by academics who are engaged in what McLeod (1999, p7-9) has recently described as 'big' research programmes. Much of the 'evidence' of disinterest in research comes from surveys indicating a lack of research productivity in terms of publications and presentations at research conferences.

The search for solutions also seems to lie with the academy. Academics are urged to make improvements to research training programmes, to strengthen the research profiles of 'non-traditional' academics and make research more 'clinically' relevant (Richardson, 1997, Betz, 1997, 1987, Hill, 1997). There is considerable speculation about the appeal of mainstream psychological research for the more 'social and artistic' personalities that are likely to become therapy practitioners. The strong interest inventory as it has become known (Harmon, et al., 1994) has been extensively used to determine personality type and vocational choice in the United States and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom. It is based on Holland's (1973, 1985, 1992) work on vocational preferences, interests and environments. This inventory uses responses to a detailed questionnaire to produce a computer-assisted profile of personality type, quantified in terms of occupational interests and choices. This profile is organised as a hexagon, portraying six basic personality types; realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising or conventional and their interrelationship. I am referring to this instrument in some detail because it has been so widely used.

It is beyond the parameters of this investigation to evaluate the instrument, in any depth, other than to note that there does seem to be a correlation between people who succeed in traditional research environments and those named as 'investigative' personality types (Holland, 1973, Mallinckdrodt, 1990, Gelso, 1993, Wampold, 1995). Those who are designated as strong social

and/or artistic personality types may not experience academic surroundings negatively, but equally may not find this type of environment the 'best fit' for their personality (Krebs, et al.,1991, O'Brien, 1995, Kahn & Scott, 1997, Bowman, 1997). These findings are pertinent in that a higher percentage of social and artistic/social types tend to be women and a higher percentage of investigative types tend to be men (Harmon, et al., 1994, Kahn & Scott, 1997).

The studies cited above are in rare agreement that the vast majority of counselling students, particularly those who go on to become practitioners, have been described as social, or artistic/ social personality types by this inventory. This has led some of the protagonists in the debate to suggest that selection procedures need to be changed in order to attract and recruit more investigative people into the counselling world (Holland, 1986, Kahn and Scott, 1997). Others suggest that research climates need to be altered and made attractive to women and to people with more social and/or artistic interests and motivations (Gelso, 1993, Gelso, et al, 1996, Hill 1997, ; Betz 1997 and Bowman, 1997).

There has also been an ongoing ideological debate about the grip of 'scientism' upon the mainstream research culture and arguments for more methodological pluralism (Howard, 1983) or more qualitative, 'human' (Rennie, 1994, McMullen, 1995), discovery-based (Mahrer, 1988, 1996) creative (Hill, 1997) and non-experimental approaches (Wallach & Wallach, 1998) have been made with increasing forcefulness. The fourth edition of the highly influential handbook of psychotherapy and behaviour change (Bergin & Garfield, 1994) tentatively, but explicitly encouraged a plurality of approaches to research in the therapeutic domain:

'Endorsing a kind of pluralism that does not throw out the virtues of traditional approaches to research, but complements these with a variety of more flexible techniques for getting at the complexity of the phenomenon we deal with.' (Bergin &Garfield, 1994, p828)

By the end of the century, writers were differentiating between research (the gathering of evidence) scholarship (the generation of ideas) and therapeutic practice, but were still calling on established researchers and academics to integrate these elements of therapeutic discourse for the benefit of practitioners (Stricker, 1992, Hill, 1997, Goodyear, et al., 2000, Stoltenberg, et al., 2000, Carter, 2000). This is an interesting distinction. North American therapeutic practice is firmly, although not exclusively, embedded within the cultures of academic psychology. European

practice has different origins and the kinds of writing referred to above as 'scholarship', literary or philosophical conversations and exchanges between ideas and practices, rather than the production of more all-encompassing models and theories, may gain more legitimacy, or certainly may capture more of our attention in the U.K.

Some thoughts about this gap

This brief overview offers some useful insights into the configuration and style of writing and representation, within the academic literature, of the research practice gap in the United States. This version of 'research' seems to consist of a cluster of cultural practices that are transmitted through apprenticeships undertaken in the form of higher degrees. It has been constructed as an endeavour that takes place in universities and is valuable only if it is put out in the public domain through publication in learned journals and academic texts. This is radically different from Freud's (1963) concept of hand-in-handedness or Epston's (1999) notion of co-research alongside clients, 'shaping' alternative knowledges of their lives. I am not suggesting that the literature outlined above is not useful, or that it is uncritical of, for instance, the gender politics or the grip of positivism within the production of mainstream psychology. I am, however, interested in the ascendance of particular constructs of therapeutic research and practice as separate enterprises that have come to overshadow the alternatives to the extent that it appears that 'one language had eaten all the others' (Atwood, 1986).

I have spent considerable time and energy citing the North American literature that generated this construct. It is a well-documented gap embedded within its psychology-dominated context. This is very different territory from the counselling sphere in the U.K. where psychology and psychiatry are only some of the many possible points of entry to the profession and where very few counsellors have completed doctoral programmes.

The North American gap firmly occupies the space between the identities of social-artistic practitioners who broadly speaking do not find traditional research training stimulating, do not engage with, value or publish research and do not have a responsibility for placing their work within the public domain and researchers who inhabit research environments, have investigative personalities and conduct and publish research and have a responsibility for making their studies clinically relevant.

It may be that some of the researchers cited above have extensive therapeutic practices (Rennie, 1998, 2001, Hill 1997 and Mahrer, 1996, all cite their own work). Cooperative communities of practice, practitioner research, practitioner research practices and therapeutic practices as research are scarcely referred to, other than as an aspect of apprenticeship or studentship or as an out-of-reach aspiration. Karasu (1986,) for example, could only 'wish that 'in the next decade they [practice, professionalism, theory and research] became inextricably interwoven' (p204).

Importing the gap

The literature cited above, for the most part pre-dates the advent of a tradition of published British counselling research (excluding the psychoanalytic tradition, which is beyond the remit of this study). It has nonetheless, been available and strongly influential. The studies above are frequently cited by established British writers (McLeod, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, Dryden, 1996, Clarkson, 1998, Wosket, 1999, Etherington, 2000, Moodley, 2001) and concurrently by practitioner-researchers (Shipton, 1994, Rance, 1996). Indeed, the research/practice gap has achieved international recognition and crops up in a range of 'western' countries, such as Scandinavia and South Africa (Skovolt and Ronnestad, 1995, Høglend, 1995, Fourie, 1996). It seems that there is international recognition that:

> ' It is widely accepted that a discontinuity or gap exists between clinical research and practice: research findings are not often reflected in the work which clinicians do. This is considered unsatisfactory and many suggestions have been made to bridge this gap' (Fourie, 1996., p7).

McLeod (1994, 1999) acknowledges that the evidence above comes from studies of North American psychologists, the majority of whom undergo training to doctoral level, including a substantive research element. He suggests that if this group of practitioners experience a research-practice gap, such a gap is even more likely to occur amongst the less formally trained professional grouping of British counsellors. This surely depends on how we construct 'research.'

In Britain, a resistance to research has been identified and named since the mid 1990's amongst both counsellors (McLeod1994, 1994a, Hicks & Wheeler,1994, Crouan,1994, Ross,1994, Shipton, 1994) and psychotherapists (Vachon, et al., 1995) and their organisations (Mellor-Clark & Shapiro, 1995). This has become known as a 'gap' and is consistently referred to as such. By the

time this study was reaching completion the naming of the 'gap' had reached almost epidemic proportions in Britain and was a commonplace taken-for-granted assumption that appeared alongside almost every reference to counselling research issues in the professional and research journals (Bond, 2001, Nelson-Jones, 2001, McLeod, 2001, 2001a, Moodley, 2001) implying a similar separation in identity claims and career trajectories to the North American experience. McLeod (2001b) launched the new British counselling and psychotherapy journal and accompanying website with a commendable overview of the history of, and future possibilities for counselling research. In this review he also echoes Watkins & Schneider (1991) mourning irresolvable differences a decade earlier, when he maintains:

> 'It may not be an exaggeration to suggest at the present time, there exists a crisis in the relationship between research and practice in counselling and psychotherapy.' (McLeod, 2001b, p5)

In fact the few studies that have explored practitioner attitudes to research within Britain have not necessarily been indicative of a crisis, and may well have been defining research in other ways. It would appear that an increasing number of practitioners are beginning to regard research as an integral aspect of their work. The BAC membership survey of 1993 revealed that 20% (c.2000) of its members had been actively involved in research, whereas by 1998 this figure had risen to 26% (c.4000) with as much as 18% (c.2000) having had their work published (McLeod & Goss, 1998). The meaning of being 'involved in research' is not necessarily in this text and it would be interesting to know more about the nature of this increased interest in research. A one to five or one to four difference suggests a gap, but is this a crisis?

'Several unpublished surveys' are cited by McLeod (1997, p493) as confirmation of the United states' (U.S.) findings amongst BAC members. Rance's (1996) study of counselling graduates from the University of Bristol partially replicated Morrow & Bradley's (1986) study of 279 North American psychotherapists. Rance confirmed that 60% (as opposed to Morrow and Bradley's 62%) of his much smaller sample of 22 people had not engaged in, or published, any research since completing their training some 5 years earlier. They did, however, exhibit a positive attitude towards being up to date and 'research minded' and were avid consumers of the current literature of counselling. A more recent and more extensive survey of 141 Scottish counsellors in the 1990's (McLeod, et al., 2000) found that they were poor consumers of the research journals, were mostly

not engaged in any research projects themselves and had for the most part had little or no research training (56% had none) but they had a high degree of interest in research, and were very much in favour of research training (80%), research conferences (70%) and research databases (97%) being set up. They also generated a range of ideas for relevant research projects.

My own survey (1997-8) of humanistic/integrative counsellors within the UK and more detailed study of the sixteen professional counsellor educators at the University of Bristol (see Appendices One, Two and Three) demonstrates some similarity with these findings. This study of 82 British counsellor educators, 59% of whom worked in British universities found that:

- 95% were active practitioners
- 90% were active supervisors
- 71% were active within 'the wider professional world of counselling'

But only 59% were active researchers and writers. This group also acknowledged a high degree of interest in research, but mad e complex, ambiguous and overlapping distinctions between research and writing. Of the 59% who were research active:

- 27% described themselves as researchers and writers,
- 22% were only writers, and
- 10% were only researchers (see appendix two)

North American definitions of research seemed to centre on undertaking some kind of research activity and published productivity. In Britain there have been indications of a 'high degree of interest in research' (McLeod, et al., 2000) and of distinctions being made between research, scholarship and writing (see: Appendix Two). There are surely major differences between research-mindedness (a critical, questioning attitude to our work) and the desire and or opportunity to undertake and publish formal research projects.

The first BAC research conference in Birmingham (1994) was largely sustained by the enthusiasm of two counsellor- academics (Wheeler & McLeod) and was attended by 80 people. By 2001 there was a supporting infrastructure, a BACP research development officer and a conference attended by 190 participants. The fledgling research-minded community of counsellors is growing and

perhaps given the different context, trainings, disciplinary knowledge bases may be able to create different opportunities (and crises) from our North American colleagues.

I am not putting forward an argument here that there is no corollary to be made, but rather that, for specific contextual and territorial reasons, the U.S. has constructed these findings as a 'gap' and there may be other less divisive stances to be taken or different definitions to be used in a different cultural context.

Constructing the British gap.

There is a strong socio-political link between Britain and North America in terms of political and economic ideologies and realities, which has often been described as a 'special relationship' (Thatcher, 1993). Despite the current moves towards 'rediscovering Europe' (Leonard, 1998, Giddens, 1998), links with the United States remain strong and the U.S. remains considerably more powerful in the 'global order' (Held, 1995, Held & McGrew, 2000). There is much that has been imported from North America in terms of the cultures and histories and educational development of counselling and psychotherapy in Britain and also much that is specific to a European culture, and a particularly British culture of volunteering and voluntary agencies (Dryden, et al., 1995, Dryden, 1996a, Mcleod, 1998).

The characterisation of the relationship between research and practice in Britain as a 'gap' rather than as, for instance, a new, or emergent or potential or unexplored or under-researched or unknown or curious or bizarre or nonexistent (for instance!) relationship, not only describes, but may go some way to defining that relationship. If we accept Bakhtin's (1981) tenet that the power relations between and within the language we use are shaped by and shape our identities and cultures (see also: , Vice, 1997, pp45-112, Mair, 2000) then it is of significant interest that the literature of counselling research determinedly separates research and practice with a 'gap'. It is peppered with concerns about the '*different* preoccupations and needs of counsellors and researchers' (Mcleod, 1999, p6) and remedies for ways to '*bridge* the gap that exists' (Dryden, 1996, pxi) or to prevent an *'increase'* and search for a '*rapprochement*' (McLeod, 2001, pp4-9) in the gap, thus preventing the continuation of 'two *different worlds*' Moodley, 2001, p 18). This is definitely not the language of 'hand-in-handedness' (Freud, 1963) nor of a 'community of practice' in which: 'a complex social landscape of shared practices, boundaries, peripheries,

overlaps, connections and encounters' (Wenger, 1998, p118) abounds. There appears to be a major conflict going on, with mediators (gladiators?) and solutions at hand. Solutions that are, interestingly, often shaped and spoken about very differently in the British context.

British identity claims and possible solutions

One concern that has parallels in the U.S. is a concern to find ways of overcoming practitioner fears and resistances to engagement with research. There is some 'haranguing' and cajoling of practitioners to become more research-minded in order to improve our service to clients (Crouan, 1994, Goss & Rowland, 2000) or our professional standing (Wheeler & Hicks 1996, Baron, 1996, Wheeler, 1999, Barden, 2000), or to prevent those working in under researched areas from 'slipping off the map altogether' (McLeod, 2001b, p 37, Bohart, et al., 1998).

In the main, however, the literature emphasises the commitment researchers had to working cooperatively and transparently within agencies (Shipton, 1994, Mellor & Shapiro, 1995) 'in collaboration' with practitioners (Mellor-Clark, et al., 1999) or providing a service and acting as a consultative resource for practitioners and counselling organisations (McLeod, 1999). The more humble tone of this literature is very noticeable and it may be that the 'advance hindsight' brought by the North American gap has been of benefit to the developing and very young body of British counselling research.

'Big' research and practitioner research

A tradition of practitioner research, a combination of ideas from action research, cooperative inquiry and reflective practice (see: Schőn, 1983, McNiff, 1993, Edwards & Talbot, 1994, Hart & Bond, 1995, Fuller & Petch, 1995, Social Work Research Centre, 1993, 1994) has been evolving throughout the helping professions and has had a much stronger foothold in Britain than North America, where it has remained largely in the domain of school counselling (Whiston, 1996) or been more tentatively constructed as the practitioner-scientist model (Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992, Houser, 1998). The term practitioner research has been taken up by counselling researchers to describe a range of small-scale, agency-based projects often generated as dissertations within master's programmes (Mcleod, 1999, 2001, 2001, Rowland & Goss, 2000, Nelson Jones, 2001, Moodley, 2001). Thus 'big' research, such as funded research projects undertaking large-scale

studies, or conducting overviews is not necessarily privileged but is described as one aspect of the counselling research agenda, alongside practitioner research, 'scholarship', evaluation and audit.

The differences then, are not so much of scale, or authority, but of appropriateness for the audience. Etherington's (2000) narrative inquiry into her relationship over time with two of her clients is practitioner research aimed at a practitioner audience and client audience. Rowland et al. (2000) and McLeod (2001d), in their overviews of research into counselling in primary care settings and counselling in the workplace are 'setting the scene' for a variety of future researchers, whereas, Roth & Fonagy (1996) and Roth & Parry (1997) are clearly aiming their reviews of effectiveness in the 'psychological therapies' in part at least at policy makers and service providers. Individuals or groups may, of course, take up one or more of these positions according to their audience. Waldegrave (2000/2001) from the Just Therapy Centre in New Zealand advocates developing a range of voices to suit different purposes. This centre publishes a variety of texts describing their therapy practices in different ways to the different communities they serve and to other practitioners and also accommodates a social policy research unit. He maintains that 'practitioners and clients like stories and films, but policymakers like reports and statistics. This is a community accountability issue' (Waldegrave, 2001).

Re-searching identity claims

The identity claims of those producing research publications in the British counselling context are not so strongly separated as their North American counterparts. Many recent writers have described themselves as practitioners who are also researchers (Wosket, 1999, Etherington, 2000, Moodley, 2001) or as 'academics who are also counsellors' (McLeod, 1999) and sit more within the traditions established by contributors like Rennie (1998a, 2001) who pointedly makes reference to his own flawed therapeutic practices when describing his research. Some mainstream 'psychological' researchers who do not have a practitioner background have begun to 'situate' and personalise their contributions to the literature rather than adopting a 'voice of god' (Harraway, 1988) position within the texts they are producing (Mellor-Clark, 2000,pp157-161).

The boundaries between research and therapeutic practices are also gradually blurring with Mearns & McLeod (1984), McLeod, (1994) Clarkson (1998) McGuire (1999) and Moodley (2001) all asserting the efficacy of counselling conversations or counselling skills as valuable research tools

throughout the human sciences and in acknowledging the everyday research activity in which counselling practitioners are already engaged. Similarly human science researchers from other disciplines like Kvale (1999) are suggesting therapeutic interviews as research sites and like Skinner (1998) were discovering that 'I felt certain that if I had had specific training in counselling skills I would have been better equipped to deal with the situation' (p539).

McGuire (1999) also maintains that 'every counsellor is a researcher' (p1) and Moodley (2001) postulates that the word 'search' is central to both endeavours, which smacks of 'hand-in-handedness', and the 'practice as co-research' position of Epston (1999).

Where does this day to day 'local' definition of re-search as practice leave us in terms responsibilities within the public domain and the opinion (Goss & Rowland, 2000) that: 'many masters level and small-scale studies are read by a very small number of people. The contribution of practitioners could be far greater if this 'grey literature' was better placed in the public domain' (Ibid, p.198)? I suspect the answers lie to some extent with the tutors and supervisors of these students in finding ways of supporting these research enterprises *after* the completion of the qualification. At the University of Bristol we provide a mini-research conference, an opportunity to present master's dissertations as papers, but we do not provide writing groups or promote co-authoring opportunities. Nor do we place any abstracts or précis of these dissertations on the web.

Ideas and practices

Counselling research in Britain is developing in an age shaped by increasing uncertainty in worldviews: an age in which ideas about local rather than universal knowledge claims are impinging across a broad spectrum of cultural discourses (Sarup, 1996). There has been an ongoing debate about these ideas and there is a considerable body of opinion that suggests that the dominance of traditional research approaches is responsible, at least in part, for the 'research-practice gap'. McLeod, (1994, 1999, 2001), Young (1995) and Moodley, (2001) all hold this view to a certain extent. There is room for a spectrum of opinions. Pilgrim (1983) is a stringent critic of positivist research traditions, Spinelli (1994) has strongly criticised the de-contextualised knowledge base of empirical research and House (1997) acknowledges that he expresses ' the anti-empiricist position in stark and uncompromising terms' (p.60). By way of contrast, Hicks & Wheeler (1994) have recommended the introduction of experimental research designs into

counsellor training as an essential component on the road to research-mindedness and Irving & Williams (1999) criticise counsellors who do not value 'science' and lack theoretical rigour. They contend that:

> 'the ethos and culture of therapy with its emphasis on personal exploration, personal learning and personal knowledge is antithetical to research' (p373).

Perhaps the most hopeful contribution to this debate comes in the shape of the newly launched BACP counselling and psychotherapy research journal and accompanying website. This journal is being distributed to all 19, 000 BACP members and thus becomes 'probably the most widely circulated counselling research journal in the world' (McLeod, 2001e) It aims to promote reflexive, contextualised, and practitioner-orientated research which is something of a radical departure. Its website calls for papers:

> 'Written in a creative and engaging manner. Practitioners are busy people, and not likely to want to spend time deciphering the meaning of research papers saturated in technical jargon. The journal is looking for papers that are succinct and readable'. Counselling and Psychotherapy research (CPR, 2001)

This certainly bodes well for practitioners who have been 'put off' reading traditional research papers by the 'god trick' as Harraway (1988) has described traditional objective researcher positions and have found, like Wosket (1999) that 'much of what is set forth in learned journals is written in the language of academic psychology, a language I find largely incomprehensible and devoid of warmth and energy. Esoteric language does not reach out to me as a fellow and fallible practitioner' (p60).

This journal also provides opportunities to increase the range of stakeholders within the counselling research domain. Many of the proponents of counselling research, myself included, have their career trajectories linked to the Research Assessment Exercise in British universities, as outlined in part one of this study. Whatever their more altruistic motives might be, it would be strange, indeed, if those who make a living out of large-scale funded research projects (Mellor-Clark & Shapiro, 1995; Roth, Fonagy, et.al, 1996, Rowland & Goss, 2000) did not strongly advocate evidence-based practice. It would be equally strange if those who make a living out of

training and supervising counselling research students (Wheeler & Hicks, 1996, Clarkson, 1998, Speedy & Etherington, 1999, McLeod 1999) did not extol the benefits for counsellors in undertaking practitioner-research degrees.

Counselling research, it seems, would do well to develop as a multi-voiced and multidisciplinary community of practice that accommodates researcher, practitioner, academic, and (dare I suggest?) client voices and a range of reflexive, personal, professional and policy-influenced or political writing styles. As Bochner (2001) pleads in defence of diversity in both method and writing in sociology:

> 'Our goal should not be to dominate those who choose a different path but to figure out how to live and work in harmony' (p154).

Research training and productivity

In fact, sites of enculturation into the cultural practices of research are necessarily different in Britain from both North America and Europe. Counsellor training, with a strong history of in-house, agency-based apprenticeship, is not as yet dominated by 'the academy'. Taught doctoral programmes for counsellors in Britain are in their infancy. The numbers of counsellors with higher degrees by research is on the increase but remains minimal. A critique of a research training environment that does not produce sufficiently research-orientated practitioners (as in the U.S.) is therefore inappropriate, although it still occurs (see: Dryden 1996, (preface) and Nelson Jones, 2001). A key difference between the training and education of both North American and British counselling psychologists (Woolfe, et al, 1996, Clarkson, 1998, Scragg, Bor & Watts, 1999) and British counsellors is the lack of attention to research issues 'per se' in initial professional counsellor training.

The University of Bristol purports to inform trainee counsellors about the nature of research into counselling, including practitioner research and to develop some critical research-consumer awareness (Johns, 1989, 1995, Speedy, 1997, Etherington, 1999). There is, nonetheless, very minimal research training within these courses, prior to the (optional) master's degree.

The literature of British counsellor training typically neglects to mention research (Dryden & Thorne, 1991, Johns, 1996, 1998, Charlton, 1996, Inskipp, 1996), as did the participants in my initial conversations amongst counsellor educators (see: Chapter Five). Some studies make

passing reference to the need for a research mentality and a critical awareness of bias, as research consumers (Connor, 1986, 1994, Dryden, 1991, Mearns, 1997). Others refer to the fact that some research or research training may be a university requirement difficult to reconcile with the role of counsellor trainee or trainer (Dryden & Feltham, 1994, Berry & Woolfe, 1997) or to the fact that research awareness and understanding is not yet a BACP requirement and that:

> ' At present, professional counsellor training courses do not have to require students to carry out a piece of research, nor indeed do they have to provide students with training to help them become informed consumers of the research literature in counselling'. (Dryden, et al., 1995., p23).

The positive personal and professional experiences of many students undertaking practitioner research studies (Speedy & Etherington, 1999) where they are available would indicate that this policy could change for the better. The BACP research committee, however, recently reported (BACP 2001) that they had lobbied the Accreditation committee (responsible for courses recognition) about this issue to no avail. It would be interesting to know how these committees negotiated the meaning of 'research', if at all and what their images of 'research' and 'practice' were during this conversation. Research-mindedness being a somewhat more manageable goal than the undertaking of a research project. There is also a growing interest in the significance of writing, both as a therapeutic endeavour (White & Epston, 1990, Etherington, 2000, Payne, 2001) and as a powerful means of re-searching and re-assessing or re-telling ideas and stories (Richardson, 1991, 2000, McLeod, 1997, Clarkson, 1998a, Speedy & Etherington, 1999). Perhaps a blurring of genres between oral therapeutic practices and practices of writing therapeutic documents will begin to shift cultural assumptions about writing, literature and research. In this way clinical practice and writing (two windows onto research) may find themselves situated side by side.

Some 'endnotes' to this chapter

The literature of the 'research practice gap' is particularly thought provoking when viewed from the sociological perspective of human endeavours (family life, workplaces, leisure pursuits, on-line chat groups, etc.) being situated in 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Drath & Palus, 1994, Wenger, 1998) This notion describes flexibly arranged groups of people with shared

interests, but potentially diverse, homogenous, different and/or mutual claims, skills and identities within a community. The success and creative energy of such undertakings, it is argued, depends on the recognition and acceptance of diverse contributions, including the encouragement of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice will operate differently where there is a privileging of particular stakeholders, or levels of contribution or by the attempted imposition of boundaries created by institutions rather than the parameters of shared practices: 'a landscape of practice forms a complex texture of distinction and association, possibilities and impossibilities, opening and closing, limits and latitude, gates and entries, participation and non-participation' (Wenger, 1998, p121).

The story of research and practice, outlined above, is one currently dominated by researcher voices, often framed within a particularly dense writing style that reminded me of Wosket's (1999) critique of research texts:

'written in the language of academic psychology, a language I find largely incomprehensible and devoid of warmth and energy. Esoteric language does not reach out to meet me as a fellow and fallible practitioner'(p.60).'

The literature is dominated by these voices, either by 'privileging' them, as in North America, or because they are the voices inviting practitioners into the arena, as in Britain. If this story could be retold as the history of an evolving community of practice, would its 'peripheral' voices more easily find an opening to position themselves differently, or more comfortably? Such a re-telling would define both research and therapy as 'practices' contributing within the therapeutic domain. To situate therapy and research as two different practices contributing differently to our knowledge base within the counselling community would provide a very different reading of the literatures outlined above and would presumably contribute to the possibility of different practices of both therapy and research.

What is particularly striking as we 'unpack' this extensive literature is the lack of reciprocity exhibited alongside the immense concern that practitioners should participate in, have training in and keep up-to date with research. In Britain, several writers are beginning to situate their research within practice and are claiming both practitioner and researcher identities. There is, however, no

equivalent concern (or at least none overtly stated) around the need for researchers to keep up their practitioner role or up-date their therapeutic skills.

The North American literature seems to be a *one-way* literature that cajoles, nurtures, encourages and despairs of practitioners. It is equally despairing of 'irrelevant' researchers who need to produce 'useful' or 'engaging' research, but does not offer professional 'practice' updating as a solution. The British literature is more diverse and interdisciplinary in its tone and goes some way to positioning counselling practice as research, but in amongst all this, curiously, the agency, participatory voices and authority of clients is scarcely mentioned. These either/or positions of research and practice could present a 'gap' for clients to fall down, they could equally well open up a space for clients to assert themselves and tell their life stories as legitimate and central participants in this conversation in ways as yet unimagined. It may yet be clients, rather than researchers or practitioners that enforce a more critical research-minded counselling practice, by virtue of a consumer led critique (see: Sands, 2000 for what House, 2001 describes as a powerful scrutiny of therapy's regimes of truth from a client's perspective).

There has been considerable concern in the literature about the ethics of writing about clients, and practitioners have often cited issues of client confidentiality and potential damage to therapeutic relationships as a 'just cause' for not placing their own practices under scrutiny or their writings in the public domain (Rance, 1996, Goss & Rowland, 2000). Times are changing. Counsellors may rightly adhere to codes of ethics and confidentiality, but clients are not bound by these codes. Notions of privacy are changing rapidly. There is an increasing genre of very intimate auto/biographical and auto/ethnographic literature (Ellis, 1995, Manning, 1995, Ronai, 1998, Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Thousands of people are willing and interested in putting their personal, sexual, and social lives up for scrutiny on prime time television (Greer, 2001). It is likely that more and more client voices will enter the public domain. They may yet become key agents in this evolving community of practice.

The investigative researcher's voice.

Much of Part Two of this study has been very satisfying to produce. There was a great deal of visual material to include in the accompanying appendices that has added a different, non-linear

dimension to the text. These tables, charts, figures and genograms are 'read' in a different way and are more like documentary photographs than chronological texts. The genogram in appendix three, for example, contains a whole plethora of stories presented in non-linear ways and as the producer of that image, my role seemed more like that of documentary film editor, cutting pasting, choosing colours, shapes, editing, and highlighting the text in a different genre. I found the survey of British colleagues produced valuable and intriguing contextualizing information. I also found this investigative literature reviewer and researcher's voice was was the hardest voice for me to privilege.

Perhaps Kahn & Scott (1997) are correct in their assumptions that women with artistic /social 'Holland personality types' are better suited to different non-investigative researcher identities. Certainly this section took much longer to write, although it was the shortest. I found the painstaking trawl of the literature of the research-practice gap, a necessary, rather than creative endeavour. I was grateful for Wosket's (1999) companionship. My research supervisor commented on the different style of writing and referencing that I had initially, unwittingly adopted. As I set out to redress this balance, it occurred to me that I might attempt to step right into that style and reproduce it as an allegorical commentary. I have gone some way towards this although I have not yet managed to produce a whole half page of references in the text. The representation of the survey findings in the appendices was the hardest to produce without falling into the 'voice of god' position as writer. If this project had been represented as a film, rather than a written text, Part One would perhaps have been a thoughtful piece of 'cinema verité'; shown on the arts cinema circuit and Part Three would have been a series of 'shorts', shot with a hand-held camera. Part Two however, would have been a documentary, a duller attempt to represent the 'facts' in what Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1991) describes wryly as *'a completely catalogued world'* (p29).

It has been important to include this section, particularly given my strong critique of the de-contextualizing tendencies of counselling researchers, but it has been harder work to try and write this in an engaging way. I remain dissatisfied and have re-arranged the illustrations within the appendices and texts many times. I became sidetracked by the writings of the philosopher and art critic, Walter Benjamin, and in particular by his engagement with the experience of colour (see: Caygill, 1997). It is as if I wanted somehow to change the lighting, put the words to music, to

allow more silences. It has been hard to create liminal spaces between these words. I have found the text harder to choreograph. They exist of course, the spaces and gaps and margins, but readers and writer alike have to work harder to find them. As Walter Benjamin (quoted in Caygill,1997) once said:

'nothing is poorer than a truth expressed as it was thought'(p,95).

Sitting beside the skeleton of a wolf

She sat for a long time beside the skeleton. She had taken several years to assemble this wolf. It had been careful, dry, dusty, thankless work. The old woman was exhausted, dissatisfied and lonely. Most people ignored her, or thought her insane. And who could blame them? All she had to show for her endeavours was a meticulous arrangement of dry lifeless bones. All that effort for so little reward.

She knew that she had to think about what song to sing. She knew that even though she was worn out she had to keep going. This whole project would be completely wasted unless she could come up with the right song, but of course, if she thought too hard and too directly, the song would not come. She would just have to sit and wait for the song to come to her. It was getting dark and, in the distance, she could hear the calls of the few remaining live wolves in the region, coming down from the mountains in the colder night air. She would just have to wait. She would not fall asleep now. She was not going to be beaten. She would just have to bide her time.

'this old woman stands between the worlds of rationality and mythos. She is the knucklebone on which these two worlds turn. This land between the worlds is that inexplicable place we all recognise once we experience it, but its nuances slip away and shape-change if one tries to pin them down, except when we use poetry, music, dance...or story'.

(Clarissa Pinkola Estes, 1992, p, 30)

Part Three: Singing over the bones

The old woman built a substantial fire alongside her skeleton. She sat for hours, unmoving, staring into the flames. She was resigned to the task of vigilantly searching for her song. And yet her mind was meandering: drifting across the crevices and spaces that were looming out of the darkening skies. It was not possible to know the song beforehand, to give voice to the unknown. Each wolf requires a different melody and each melody a particular rhythm and pace. The wolf woman was familiar with open spaces and with emptiness. She was not afraid of death. She had often dropped from our memory and had occasionally dropped right out of history. She had always outlasted her own disappearances. She was prepared to sit and wait until the landscape shifted.

Then suddenly the song was upon her and she was up and alert, singing into the night. She sang passionately to the skeleton, as the bones fleshed out and the creature became covered with fur, its tail curling upwards. The singing was softer now; almost a lament, and the wolf began to breathe.

Wolves consoled us. Two or three times each night
For minutes on end

They sang. They had found where we lay.
And the dingoes and the Brazilian-maned wolves-
All lifted their voices together
With the grey Northern pack.
The wolves lifted us in their long voices
They wound us and enmeshed us
In their wailing for you, their mourning for us,
They wove us into their voices.

(Ted Hughes, Life after Death, 1998, p182)

In Part Three of this study the central task of narrating this text, begun by the scholar and continued in Part Two by the researcher, is now taken up in the writer's voice. This is my attempt at writing down the bones in an engaging and creative way. In Part One I was setting down my ideas and in Part Two I was investigating the context of the study, but now we have arrived heart of the matter. Throughout the previous pages there has been much talk of 'more of which later'. And now we have arrived at later. The reader is now wholly dependent on my skill in representing conversations and stories to find out what this enquiry is all about. For:

> 'writing, too, is ninety percent listening. You listen so deeply to the space around you that it fills you, and when you write, it pours out of you.....listen to the past, future, and present right where you are (Goldberg, 1986, pp52-53).

In Chapter Seven, 'Eliciting/co-authoring narratives in conversation', I chart the process of my conversations with co-researchers. This is an account of an ongoing and developing understanding of re-search conversations and of narrative inquiry within organisations. It is also an account of my own transgressions and transformations as an interviewer and later as a therapist, towards narrative ideas and practices. In Chapter Eight, 'transcribing and representing stories', I explore the ethical issues and power relations that emerge in the process of transcribing and representing the stories that I have been entrusted with by other people. These stories have been set out in three chapters:

Each of Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven explores the local, personal stories, the dominant cultural and professional stories and the emergent or alternative stories of five participants that seem to surface during this research. These stories have been set out as core texts, followed by retellings by the participant and my own further retellings. Chapter Twelve offers some reflections on the impact of all these tellings and re-tellings as an 'accumulated' narrative.

I have set the participant's stories out in this way in this instance, but have changed the order and nature of the stories I chose to highlight several times. I considered presenting multiple, overlapping versions of Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven as each extract of text is multi-storied and could include any of these aspects on different readings. I was slightly ahead of this Ph.D. project as it is currently envisaged, but not ahead of Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p583), who were proposing hypertext as a new research genre in a multi-storied world or Gergen & Gergen (2000, pp1039-1041) who were looking towards the world wide web of both the present and the future to form

inter- (or perhaps meta-?) national 'communities of dialogue'. Had this dissertation been produced in hypertext, multiple possibilities would have been available beneath the constraints of the word limits that might have presented the text, 'in a way that doesn't present emergent, multiply sited, contradictory movements as fixed and monolithic' (Lather, 1991, p1). On reflection, I could see that this might be construed as a rather alienating use of post-modern irony. It also wasted precious wordage within the current format. Suffice it to say that I might well construct these stories differently were I to do so again today and that I would encourage readers to re-construct them in meaningful ways. I have already acknowledged that the final chronological order of this thesis is different from the story of its construction (another parallel hypertext opportunity). It can be read, and therefore in a sense re-written, in a number of ways.

Chapter Seven: Eliciting/ Co-authoring Narratives in Conversation

This narrative inquiry rests on assumptions about the storied nature of human experience, as explored above. It corresponds with Sarbin's (1986) suggestion that narratives provide a new root metaphor for the study of human beings, although this is also a very old metaphor in what White (2001) after Bruner (1990) would describe as 'folk psychology'. Folk psychology has always privileged local as well as expert knowledge. Denzin & Lincoln's (1994a, 2000a) 'narrative turn', albeit within a post-modern, constructivist paradigm, represents a 'return' to an understanding of our lives through the multiplicity of stories we tell about ourselves. It also represents a move away from structured academic disciplines towards a more loosely coordinated, interdisciplinary effort to write, interpret and disseminate stories (see: Josselson, 1993, 1996a, 1999). A combination of not overtly privileging particular discourses and of explicitly promoting the deconstruction of taken for granted assumptions (Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992, White, 1995, Monk, et al, 1997, Speedy, 2000) immediately places narrative inquiry in quite a radical position within research methodologies (Lather, 1991, Davies, 2000). This transgression, either by default or deliberate stance, is the result of equal attention being paid to the local stories and 'accounts of women, people of colour, and representatives of other groups whose lives and whose stories have historically been squelched, marginalized, or ignored' (McAdams, et al., 2001, pxii).

The principal purpose of this study was to describe more richly the lived experience of my colleagues at the University of Bristol and their relationships to the world of research, including aspects of those experiences that have been 'squelched, marginalized or ignored'. I wanted to employ the most favourable means of evoking these kinds of stories. I considered naturalistic or unobtrusive research methods (see Lee, 2000, Erlandson., et al, 1993), but I abandoned the notion of conducting 'fly on the wall' research within my own organisation for both ethical and logistical reasons. Naturalistic inquiry theoretically avoids the 'extra-ordinary' and 'intrusive' activity of the artificially constructed research interview. I very much liked the idea of an anthropological dig into the social dramas or every day events and happenings within my own experience (Turner & Bruner, 1986) and definitional ceremonies or defining moments of my cultural identity (Myerhoff, 1986). In order to 'trawl' sufficient amounts of natural conversation, group interaction and

documentation, however, I would have needed to spend a considerable proportion of my time within simultaneous researcher and colleague relationships. I felt very strongly that both my co-researchers and myself needed some parameters to the moments of being researched and not researched, not least in order for me to be able to continue to do my 'day' job. To be 'an ethnographer' at meetings that I was also facilitating seemed too hard for everybody to manage.

I nonetheless liked the idea of capturing 'conversations in situ' (Lee, 2000, pp33-62) and did not want to reproduce the kinds of 'silently orchestrated' conversations that had been so strongly criticised within the literature of research interviewing. There is a strong feminist critique of the ethics and purposes of 'hit and run' interviews, whereby researchers do not build a meaningful relationship with interviewees (Oakley, 1981), do not take account of the impact of their research endeavours (Finch, 1983) and do not transgress the boundaries of 'observer' into 'emancipator' (Lather, 1995, Lather & Smithies, 1997). These critiques of the traditional conventions of research interviews has been taken up by Mischler (1986, 1991) and Kvale (1996, 1999) in their discussions of the discursive nature of interviews and the co-construction of the stories elicited, and by counselling researchers in their concerns about the 'tin opener' effects of researching sensitive issues (Etherington, 1996, Skinner, 1998, Mcleod, 1999). It seemed vital to our wherewithal as an organisation that co-researchers knew when they were being researched and recorded, whilst at the same time, I wanted to reduce what Mischler (1986, p65) described as the 'critical gap' between research interviews, that are frequently reported without 'attention to their discursive nature' and naturally occurring conversations, that are likely to illicit stories from both parties.

Positioning myself

I considered the possibility of also interviewing myself or including a conversation with myself in this part of the study, as one of the 16 people within the group. As with my reflexive researcher's diary, mentioned in Part One, this singling out of my 'participant' voice implied an adherence to the conventions of the regulation and restraint of my own voice throughout the text and 'the myth of silent authorship' (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1997, p193). As I reread this text, I questioned these practices again. Have I fallen foul of the regulators of human science research? Am I worried that a more personal voice will be thought self-indulgent? Have I ended up on the side of those who see autobiographical writings as irrelevant? I have surely not come down on the side of neutrality (see Mykhalovskiy, 1997, p229)? I think not. Readers will hear quite enough of my voice as critic,

researcher, writer, principal researcher and author of the entire text. I have not specifically included my personal story, but I have been an explicitly active co–author within all the research conversations. I also included re-tellings of each of my co-researcher's stories within this study and each of these re-tellings was from my own standpoint as audience to the collection of stories. Each of these re-tellings, and indeed, much of this text per se, is transparently autobiographical. I decided that anything more would, as Clandinin and Connelly (1994) suggest, overemphasise my 'signature' on the text.

Collecting two –way conversations

According to psychotherapists, White (1995), Mcleod (1997), Payne (2000), life story researchers, Ellis (1995), Josselson and Lieblich (1996, 1999), McAdams, et al. (2001) and feminists (Lather, 1997, Davies 2000) amongst others, after Geertz (1973) and Myerhoff (1980) from anthropological traditions, Derrida (1978, 1981) and Foucault (1973, 1988) from philosophical and sociological traditions and Bruner (1986), Sarbin (1986) and Polkinghorne (1988) from linguistic and psychological traditions, we collect far more 'lived experience' than we know what to do with. The stories we perform in conversations and interactions with others are a means of prioritising and organising this experience. It is in conversations that we generate meaning and create the stories that shape our experience. It is the business of having an audience, of being witnessed, and of the positions taken up by those witnesses that has been so frequently suppressed rather than celebrated within the literature of research interviewing (Bernstein, 1997). Stories elicited from research conversations, like all conversations, are products of social interactions that are themselves the product of power relations. In making the structure and process of those conversations transparent it is perhaps possible to determine to some extent where collective and personal agencies and cultural constraints collide (see: Davies, 2000a, pp55-68).

I have included in this section some core stories from the research conversations I conducted in the order in which they took place. Each of the fifteen conversations lasted about 90 minutes and was succeeded between one and two weeks later by another, 30-40 minute, 're-telling' conversation. These conversations were not structured, but were clearly for a specific, previously agreed purpose. The conversations were an explicitly two-way process, in that they were all informed by each other. In consequence they all began with the co-researchers in the questioning position, finding out about what had gone on before. Then we changed positions and I asked more

questions, or, for long periods of time, had little or nothing to contribute. The result was a spiral of conversations of increasing complexity and interconnectivity. The first interview with Alexia was informed only by the pilot study, whereas Donald's, the fifteenth, was informed by a distillation of all the preceding conversations and my own differently developed sense of myself as an interviewer.

This process of collaborative, interconnected interviewing was somewhat counter cultural to the expectations of colleagues with a more positivist construction of the research processes. When I asked Trish, interviewee number 6, at the beginning of the interview what she had heard around the place about the conversations I had been having, she replied:

'I deliberately avoided asking or overhearing, so as not to contaminate this interview'.

She was nonplussed to discover that I was happy to discuss how things were shaping up, in a collaborative way:

'god alone knows what you are going to do with all this...this spaghetti heap'...

and I have to admit there were times when I asked myself the same thing. Other people were more forthcoming. Grace, interviewee number nine volunteered:

'well, I've heard its quite fun, and it'll make me think a bit... and I believe Dora fell asleep ...which I'm going to try not to do...'.

and James, interviewee number eleven, left no illusions:

> *'frankly I haven't heard much about all this. I've been away of course, but I have to say that whilst I love a good gossip, some of us have more interesting things to talk about that this research project. To those who want to talk about the conversations with you, I say... get a life'.*

In sharing information across the team about insights I was having or patterns that might be emerging, I was enabling them to be influenced by each other's experiences, as I had been. It did mean that their responses were not confidential across the group (except for remarks about each other, which I removed) but it also created a more congenial and collaborative atmosphere. I believe this participative style was conducive to my colleagues feeling more engaged as collaborators, rather than as the subjects of my research. Heather saw me as the principal writer in

a joint endeavour: '*you are writing a slice of our collective biography...but we are the source and we have our eyes on the details*'.

What I did not share across the group, until the study was all but completed, were the intimate and personal stories that each participant told. Within each multi-storied conversation there emerged a very particular, personal account. These stories were not always overtly connected with my own aims for the project, but were the stories that participants particularly wanted to tell me about themselves at that time. The literature of 'researching sensitive topics' (Lee, 1993, Renzetti & Lee, 1993, Etherington, 1996, 2000) does not necessarily include topics such as researcher/practitioner relationships. The kinds of conversations that developed, however, evoked all sorts of responses and stories, as has been described by other 'sequential interviewers as accidental therapists' (see: Finch, 1983 and, in particular, Ortiz, 1994, 2001). These personal narratives included stories of struggles with mental health issues, stories of not belonging in families of origin, 'disabling' fears of intellectualism and academia and stories of neglect and isolation at work. Although they were very personal narratives, it might well be argued that they provide as rich or even a richer insight into normative and/or cultural identities than more collectively constructed stories, and that: 'personal narrative is a privileged site for the investigation of cultural identity and its construction' (Gone, et al., 1999, p371).

It was part of my contract with each participant that their stories would not be shared with anyone else until they had witnessed them being transcribed, retold in stanza form and retold again within the context of this study.

Narrative ideas and interview practices

In his overview of interviewing, Kvale(1996) cites twelve aspects of successful research conversations, suggesting they should be qualitative, positive and meaningful experiences, descriptive rather than interpretive, embedded in the life world of the interviewee, interpersonally sensitive, open to change, open to ambiguity, and sufficiently focussed and specific. At the outset of this part of the study I felt determined to 'capitalize on my existing skills' as a counsellor, in the ways these conversations took place (May, 1996, Kvale, 1999). I may have had some learning to do about other research methods, including writing in engaging ways, but as a person-centred counsellor I felt that I had a 'ringside seat' with regard to interviewing skills. This turned out to be

the greatest learning for myself and ultimately for my colleagues, from this venture. I have listed eleven of Kvale's twelve aspects above, the last one, 'a deliberate naiveté' was the aspect that shook my complacency. Kvale goes on to describe this position in some detail, maintaining that:

> 'the interviewer should be curious, sensitive to what is said-as well as to what is not said-and critical of his or her own presuppositions and hypotheses during the interview.'(Kvale, 1996, p33)

I realised early on, sometime during the pilot study, that this stance of 'unknowing curiosity' was, in fact, very different from my position as a person-centred counsellor. Perhaps I did not have such a 'ringside seat' after all. As I explored the ways that researchers asked questions, particularly of people who had been 'squelched, marginalized or ignored' (see: Riessman, 1990, interviewing divorced women, Sarris, 1993, 1994, talking to native American Indians, and Lather, 1997 and Crossley, 1998, listening to women with HIV/AIDS), I realised that narrative and poststructuralist research interviews had the interviewer placed very differently from the positions I took up as a counsellor. This position seemed de-centred, rather than person-centred and seemed lacking in the presupposition that anyone had much of a clue about how human beings worked.

I was conscious of the concerns voiced by other counselling researchers like Etherington (1996) and Grafanaki (1996) about the possibilities of intrusion into people's lives, and initially from the presupposition that I wanted to maintain a researcher, rather than therapist stance, I began to enter into these conversations from a very different standpoint than that of a person-centred counselling practitioner. (These ideas were later to turn upside down as the researcher position began to influence my therapeutic work more and more.) At the outset, I positioned myself as curious and unknowing and did not use much reflection or paraphrasing, although I was warm and collegial. I asked more and more questions. As I researched Kvale's (1996) preferred position of deliberate naiveté and curious questioning, I was drawn more and more to poststructuralist writings and to the work of White and Epston (White & Epston, 1990, Epston & White, 1992, White, 1995, 1997, 2000) and other advocates of what were becoming known as the narrative therapies (see also Parry & Doan, 1994, Freedman & Combs, 1996, Monk, et al., 1997, Bird, 2000). By interviews four and five with Lynn and Heather, I was adopting a very different way of interviewing and by the last five interviews, which ended nearly a year after the first one with Alexia, the kinds of conversations we were having had been transformed. Heather, Liz, Paul and Clare all found these

conversations therapeutic. They might have had a similar experience however I had chosen to position myself, but they were also interested in the fact that we were talking together in new ways.

For myself, I was beginning to question the therapeutic value (as opposed to the truth) of humanistic notions of human potential, buried beneath layers of conditions of worth, and also to question the usefulness of other essentialist ideas about human nature. I began to experiment in my therapeutic as well as research conversations, with conversations based upon poststructuralist constructs of agency. If, for instance, human 'agency' described our ability to perform a multiplicity of stories, within cultural constraints, and in this way generate possibilities in our lives, what difference would that make to how I worked? By the time I came to the last interview some of my answers to this were becoming apparent. Clare was quite infuriated that: '*you've got a supply of questions. Where do they keep coming from? They keep getting right in between the gaps in my thinking'.*

and Donald asked:

> *'you asked some very interesting questions in very interesting ways. We've gone down quite unexpected avenues, not new avenues exactly, but we seem to be traversing them differently. What did you just ask and how did you decide what questions to ask?'*

The answer I gave him perhaps explains something of the process:

> *'The questions I asked you when we started again were: What did you notice yourself saying? What does that tell you about what suits you as a therapist? Why does that suit you? Would any of that carry over to suit you as a researcher? How do you know? What's the difference? How do you know? Which of the people you talked about earlier, the ones that support you, which of them would not be surprised to hear you saying that? What would he say?'*

By the time I had reached the final interview, I had become adept at what might be described as deconstructing questions, questions that make the familiar unfamiliar, strange or at least worth another look (White, 1993, 2000). White, who has been described as a 'therapeutic anthropologist' (Bubenzer, in: White, 1995, p27) has taken ideas from a range of sources; from anthropologists like Geertz (1973) and Myerhoff (1980) about local knowledges and describing cultural practices 'thickly'; from Foucault (1980) with regard to modern power relations and the constraints and

possibilities they place on agency, and from Derrida (1978, 1981) and other poststructuralists (see also: Bachelard, 1986) about deconstructing or unpacking meanings. He has been concerned with exploring the alternative, possible or preferred stories and meanings that are embedded in implicit ways in people's identity claims. A range of therapists has taken up these ideas, but I would argue that they also hold good for researchers. In fact narrative therapists frequently describe themselves as co-researchers alongside their clients in their lives (Epston, 1999) or as 're-searching for unique experiences' (Bird, 2000, pp67-64). The argument that much therapy is akin to, and could be presented as, research has already been made (Kvale, 1999, McGuire, 1999), as has the argument that clients and others may find research therapeutic (Finch, 1983, Ortiz, 2001,Etherington, 2001). This overlaps, but is somewhat different from the arguments that I hope to make for the use of the questioning that has been developed by narrative therapists as a research practice. In the next chapter I shall also put forward the case for the transcribing of conversations that has been advocated by researchers as a useful style for the presentation of therapeutic documents and the recording of specific moments in therapy.

However divergent their purposes, the practices of conversation and writing in both these domains may at times be similar, or identical. Indeed, it is my intention to use these practices to trouble and to question the edges of taken-for-granted distinctions between 'research' and 'therapy' as differently privileged sites of learning about people. In so doing I may 'attend to the politics of what we do and do not do at a practical level' (Lather, 1991, p13). The purpose of therapy is to sustain and support clients in their lives. Narrative practitioners would argue that much of this process is also sustaining of therapists in their lives and that therapy is a two –way process (see: White, 1997, pp11-93, Payne 2000, pp210-222 and Speedy, 2000b). I was left at the end of this study still speculating about the similar, at times identical, and different purposes and practices of research and therapy.

Deconstructing and externalising conversations

I have explored elsewhere the enormous impact that the ideas and practices of narrative therapy have had on my work as a counsellor, supervisor and educator, (see: Speedy, 2000, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) and as a researcher (see Speedy, et al, 2001, in press). It is beyond the remit of this study to address these issues further here, other than to say that my initial premise that my practitioner skills were more than adequate to the task and would remain unchanged throughout

these endeavours proved incorrect. It was in the area of my therapeutic practice that the greatest impact occurred. This has been exciting, rewarding and extremely inconvenient.

As far as this project was concerned, by immersing myself in the craft of narrative questioning, I found myself more able to give 'systematic attention to the hidden assumptions in the ways people tell their stories' (Drewery & Winslade, 1997, p33). I found that by engaging in externalising conversations that separated people from their claims of 'practitioner' or 'researcher' or other identities, more spaces opened up within the conversations.

Many in the group, for example, talked about 'proper' research as something that they were not engaged in (Alexia, Heather, Lynn, Paul, Sonya, Grace, Dora, Liz and Donald). The poststructuralist construct of the 'absent but implicit' (see: Sarup, 1993, pp32-56) informed a series of deconstructing questions that gave rise to a range 'points of entry' to alternative research stories (White, 2000). These stories did not reframe or replace the first description in any way, but they did add a thicker, more multi-storied description. Embedded within notions of proper research, for instance, are all sorts of possibilities for engaging in improper or other kinds of research, or indeed completely 'other' kinds of proper activities. There also seems to be an implication that other people are involved in proper research. Consequently some of the stories about those kinds of people, the positions they hold, their power relationships with counselling and so on, might also be very interesting to explore. Grace produced a very vivid depiction of these 'proper researchers':

> *'Well they'd be very bright, very intellectual, very.*
>
> *I suppose my image is 'in the head'.*
>
> *They'd be very much ideas people, who,*
>
> *who have an idea and are fascinated by it and follow it like a dog after a rat.*
>
> *You know. And have got to get hold of it and shake it, and shake it & shake it and really see if it ... see what happens. And they might shake it so hard that the bottom fizzles out.'*

I have no way of knowing whether a person-centred style of reflecting, paraphrasing, clarifying, tentative challenging and so forth would have produced similar descriptions. It is likely that a different text would have emerged. What does seem vital to the integrity and validity of this project is to record this process and to make the style and manner of questioning apparent. In each

conversation, my attention was very much taken up with the stories that people told about themselves, the habitual stories they told, the dominant stories that abounded in their cultural contexts and the alternative stories and lapses from or resistances to the 'accepted version', more of which shortly.

Researchers rarely discuss the stance they take in this way and whole volumes of narrative inquiry continue to be produced with little or no attention given to the place of the inquirer within the conversation or text (see Josselson & Lieblich, 1996, 1999 and McAdams, et al., 2001, for recent examples of this). This might come from an appropriate desire on the part of researchers not to claim centre stage, but it is curious that so many texts that claim, in all or part, a social constructionist standpoint shed so little light on the ways in which the narratives were co-constructed. Kvale's (1996) concerns with 'presuppositions and hypotheses' on the part of interviewers should surely be as much to do with the process as the content of conversations. A vital part of that process, it seems to me, should be what Bird (2000) calls the way we 'situate ourselves for discovery' (pp55-57). My main means of positioning myself for discovery within this project was to draw on a style of questioning that enabled participants to 'trigger reflexive activity into existing belief systems' (Tomm, 1988, p9). I found two key ideas from the narrative therapies, firstly that questions can be used to generate meaning and experience and secondly that people make sense of their lives by organising this experience into stories, extremely useful in developing the kinds of questions that I asked. I found the sorts of question categories and ways of asking them described by White (1988, 1989) Freedman and Combs, (1993, 1996) and Anderson & Goolishan (1991) useful in formulating questions that elicited stories. These were: *'opening space'* questions, looking at circumstances, exceptions to 'habitual' narratives or from other points of view, such as:

- 'Are there any circumstances in which you could see the university valuing you more?' (to Dora)
- 'Have you ever surprised yourself in your relationship with writing?' (to Donald)
- 'What would you think if I let slip that I already perceived you as a researcher? (to Grace),

- ‘ Suppose one night. While you were asleep there was a miracle and all this was made possible. How would you know? What would be different? (to Clare[2])

or *story development* questions, exploring habitual or alternative stories more fully, such as:

- ‘How would that make a difference for you? (to Paul)
- Why did you do that and whatever happened? (to Grace)

and, most significantly and, in my case, most frequently, *meaning questions* which ‘invite people to examine the implications of the emerging story within the domain of beliefs and values’ (Freedman and Combs, 1993, p301) such as:

- ‘what does that mean to you?’ and ‘What does that say about you?’ (to virtually everyone) or
- ‘What does the knowledge that your students appreciate that aspect of your work say about you?’ (to Donald).

Space prohibits even ‘cleaned prose’ transcripts of most of these conversations. I have included in Table K (see p, 152) a transcript of most of my interventions (apart from social oil and lengthy storytelling responses) in my conversations with Clare, the penultimate interviewee. I have not chosen this example for any particular reasons, although having picked her at random, it is worth noting that Clare was one of the four participants who had previously been a student on a course I was tutoring. Clare was relatively new to the role of course tutor and I asked her a slightly wider range of questions than some of her more experienced colleagues who were given more ‘meaning’ questions. The list of questions I asked Clare is not meant to be exhaustive, but is indicative of some of the ways the stories represented here were elicited from participants. The interview with Clare lasted 90 minutes, and apart from the two extensive pieces of narration from myself, Clare clearly held the floor for most of that time. It seems important, in the context of a research project, to be explicit about my own position in these conversations and my own interest in eliciting and co-constructing stories. I do not wish to imply, however, in isolating these questions for illustrative purposes, that they are in any way manualised or standardised questions. They were, rather, questions informed by my understandings of narrative ways of working that arose in response to

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[2] This is de Shazer’s (1988) ‘miracle question’, from the ‘Brief Family Therapy Centre’.

my participants. Some of them were 'brilliant' questions that completely failed to inspire my interviewee, such as:

- 'What are the ways that it makes a difference for you working at a university?'
- 'And does it make a difference to you, what difference does it make that this is a University?'
- 'Do you, do you make use of the University as well as it using you as an employee, or . ?'

All but the last of which failed to excite Clare in any way. Or the superbly timed (I fondly imagined):

- 'What does that say about you?'

which elicited *'very little'* as Clare's response. For the most part, however, I found that these questions worked, not because they were brilliant or even halfway decent, but because I was asking them with an attitude of curiosity and was celebrating, rather than bemoaning my lack of precognition and 'always moving toward what is *not yet known*' (Anderson & Goolishan, 1990, p159) From this stance, I found my participant's 'emerging stories as suspenseful, exciting and meaningful as they did' (Freedman and Combs (1993, p303).

Table K: An example of reflexive or deconstructing questions used in interviewing Clare.
Key: REF = reflection *RES = response to Clare's questions or statements* *OQ = Other type of question* *[] long section of the conversation from Jane Speedy, usually imparting information or catching up on the story so far.* *OSQ = open space question* *SDQ = story development question* *MQ = meaning question*
So this is different arrangement really REF
I don't know if this seems different in any way? OSQ
Does anything surprise you about it? OSQ
And how does that seem? MQ

What does that mean to you? MQ
So what did you already know about this project from around the place? OQ
Anything else you want to know? OQ
Yes its changing the way I work in a range of ways… the side effects on my practice are interesting. RES
I'm exploring the ideas of narrative therapists, they've made a big impact on this study RES
Yes there will be, but you don't have to do the imaging, or anything else that doesn't feel comfortable. RES
It's just another way of accessing and exploring people's ideas and stories. RES
Only Dora fell asleep so far. RES
[Long section of JS telling some stories of the research project so far and responding to questions from Clare.]
So you couldn't have predicted it particularly? OQ
If you had of predicted it, what might you have predicted? OSQ
At the university? RES
Ye, big changes are afoot with the mainstreaming of continuing education. RES
What are the ways that it makes a difference for you working at a university? SDQ
And does it make a difference to you, what difference does it make that this is a university? SDQ
Do you, do you make use of the University as well as it using you as an employee, or . . .? SDQ
What do other people in your life say about that? OSQ
How do you know when you've got it? MQ/OSQ

If you woke up tomorrow morning and found that they had produced incontrovertible evidence that counselling was effective what would that evidence be like? How would you know it was valid? OSQ
Why would you do that? MQ/SDQ
What would that mean for you? MQ
What does that say about you? SDQ/MQ
So do you think, you could you see yourself as a researcher? OQ/RES
Um, do you currently see yourself as a researcher, or could you? OSQ
Who would not be surprised to hear that about you? OSQ
Do you have an image of what a counselling researcher's like, I mean apart from . . . OQ
What does that say about your understanding of this work? MQ
What do you appreciate about that experience? MQ
Does anything piss you off? MQ
No, really!! Why doesn't that surprise me? OSQ (Joke.)
So how is that different from any other kind of researcher? OSQ
What does that mean to you? MQ
So, I'm just wondering, what a research climate might be like in counselling. SDQ
Suppose one night. While you were asleep there was a miracle and all this integration was made possible. How would you know? What would be different? OSQ/ SDQ
Can I ask you about that? OQ
Well you don't have to struggle any longer if you don't want to, we could stop right there...

What I'm going to do, I think it's quite complex, [Long section of JS explaining the issues of collaboration and stages of consultation that were going to take place throughout the study.] RES
I think it's really important, because it's an intimate research model. RES
And I feel that it's not only . . .RES
So what did that mean to you? MQ
How did you feel about this trend beginning? SDQ
If you were to take the next step what might it be? SDQ
Were you feeling a bit cornered by the questioner? Yes! OQ
What's she going to ask next? OQ
Is there anything else you wanted to ask me? OQ
OK, thank you. RES
That's fine, that's absolutely fine. RES
Is there anything else you want to say? OQ

Telling and retelling stories

One of the most effective aspects of this process for my colleagues and myself was our recognition of the importance of the telling and retelling of these stories in different ways and of having an audience or witnesses to these testimonies (see White & Epston, 1990, Cortazzi, 1993 and Frank, 1995, for explorations of the significance of retelling). It is perhaps worth restating that neither the tellings nor the re-tellings changed the original story or its circumstance, nor the censoring and editing process that preceded the story being told in what Foucault (1981) describes as 'a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship'(p61). Indeed, in this power relationship, as probably needs to be frequently stated, I had not only the authority of researcher, but also of past or concurrent relationships as colleague, tutor, supervisor or manager. I would also not wish to imply that the possibilities of telling different stories or of being 'situated for discovery' (Bird, 2000, p55-57) are

equally abundant for us all. 'Cultural constraints' are not evenly distributed. As Conley (2000) points out repeatedly in his powerful life story and exploration of white privilege in the U.S.:

> 'I can believe what I want to believe. This is the privilege of the middle and upper classes in America - the right to make up the reasons things turn out the way they do, to construct our own narratives rather than having the media and society do it for us' (p119).

Nonetheless, human beings frequently learn from repeated retellings of the same stories and often re-tell the significant stories that shape their lives. Indeed, this retelling, and being witnessed, can sometimes make different or greater sense or meaning of life events (see Riessman, 1991, Etherington, 2000). This construct of telling and re-telling and listening again to other re-tellings has become central to the practices of the narrative therapies (White, 1997,pp3-93, Morgan, 2000, Speedy, 2000). Telling and re-telling stories in these conversations enabled some people to tell quite different stories about themselves and their work, and yet others to elaborate on the stories that they preferred. Morag, Heather, Dora, Grace, Liz, Paul and Donald, in particular emerged with quite different descriptions and had in some ways 're-authored' their landscapes of research and practice in the process.

A second re-telling took place in conversations one to two weeks after the initial meeting had occurred. I had initially envisaged these re-tellings as a revised form of interpersonal process recall (IPR) of the sort that had been used by other counselling researchers (Elliott, 1986, Rennie, 1992, Grafanaki & McLeod, 1995) but in fact this would have required a redefining of the conversational climate in quite a structured way. What transpired was rather different. The recording of the previous conversation was made available and either the research participant or myself chose an aspect of that conversation that had stuck in our minds, or sprang to mind in the moment, to trigger off our conversation. These meetings did not follow the formal structure of IPR at all. They seemed to have a life of their own that very much followed the flow of the previous encounters. These second conversations became a retelling of significant elements of the first conversation, either with regard to the interaction between the two of us, or by focussing on powerful accounts of the co-researcher's life that had made some kind of impact. Several people were concerned about our waywardness in this matter. James said:

'I'm not sure this was IPR, in fact, I'm sure it was not. Does it matter? It was a really interesting meeting' .

And Heather responded, as if to some absent headteacher figure:

'will we get told off do you think, well I suppose it's your project...I remember you saying this would be a bit like IPR but it hasn't been at all in terms of structure, or process.... its been something else..'

Perhaps Lynn gave the most powerful account of what might be implicit in some of these concerns:

The anxiety is about whether I know what I don't know
in terms of the academic life in the university
or me as an academic teacher (so-called) in the department,
you know.... and I,
do I know enough?
am I good enough?
do I know what I'm supposed to know?
And certainly with my research the feeling
of well...Are there arcane secrets that actually I don't know
because I've come late to university life
and I'm not...
I don't think of myself as an academic,
We become these labels people use,
and always underneath that sort of anxiety
about what don't I know,
you know....
What have I missed?
What if?
Is there more to this than I than I think?

Concerns about whether, to quote Morag, we were *'in the right place at all'* and whether, for instance, we were going to be spotted not doing IPR, even though we did not want to, emerged again and again. For my own part, I was not concerned about transgressing the traditions of IPR for these re-tellings that came from and developed a rich tradition of their own. Researchers often write about their projects, with hindsight, as if they proceeded according to premeditated plans. Occasionally participative and feminist enquirers record the ways their project changes course

during the group process (see: West, 1995, Lather & Smithies, 1997, Grossman, et al, 1999). I suspect that serendipity and happenstance have a central place in many more research projects than much of the literature would have us believe.

I am not suggesting that the kinds of narrative interviewing that evolved and took place within this study are in any way an 'authoritative version' of the research interview, nor am I advocating re-tellings and re-presentations of conversations over and above IPR as a method. In the 'interview society' in which we live (see: Atkinson and Silverman, 1997) there are many different types of interview available and many assumptions about them. They all provide different chances for us to understand how people construct their lives. To quote Fontana and Frey's (2000) recent overview of interview possibilities:

'certain types of interviewing are better suited to particular kinds of situations, and researchers must be aware of the implications, pitfalls, and problems of the types of interviews they choose' (p667)

The conversations we recorded in Bristol did not allow us to conduct grounded theory or other kinds of more traditional 'content analysis', as they were themselves part of a chronological process the one informing (or contaminating) the other. Our retellings of the principal stories of the conversations did not allow this study to stand alongside other studies within the tradition of IPR as a research method. These conversations did, however, illustrate the ways that people constructed their working lives and identities and told stories about them. These were also conducive methods for someone like myself, researching within my own organisation, in as 'ordinary' and 'curious' a conversational style as possible.

There was no shortage of powerful, poignant, funny or insightful moments in our interactions. I was not concerned so much about 'getting it right' for the arcane secret holders, but I was preoccupied with doing justice to these stories as I embarked upon my own re-tellings in written form.

Chapter Eight: Constructing, transcribing and re-presenting stories

The conversations that I had had with my colleagues between 1998 and 1999 had gone some way to confirming Mischler's (1986) contention that

'when the balance of power is shifted, respondents are likely to tell stories. In sum, interviewing practices that empower respondents also produce narrative accounts'. (p, 119)

I was now facing the task of considering how best to re-present them.

In Part One of this study I had gone some way towards exploring the limitations of traditional 'counselling research' compared with the excitements of poststructuralist, emancipatory, and feminist ideas. In this regard I had stepped into a place alongside those 'discourses/ practices seeking to challenge the legitimacy of the dominant order and break its hold over social life' (Lather, 1991, xv). The discourse was seductive, as were discussions about approaches, but when it came to the construction and re-presentation of narratives I found the research practices harder to locate, or justify.

It seemed that there were thoughtful approaches to narrative analysis from sociolinguistic and/or phenomenological frameworks, exploring the deeper narrative structures inherent in conversations (Polanyi, 1985, Riessman, 1993, Mcleod & Balamoutsou, 2001, Mcleod & Lynch, 2000) or psychodynamic frameworks exploring the unconscious underlying processes (McAdams, 1993, 2001) in conversations. I also came across the extensive work of Boothe, et al., 1999 and Wyl, 2000, which has similar origins, although too late for consideration in this study.

Equivalent research practices embedded within a poststructuralist worldview were not so readily available. Foucauldian discourse analysis (Potter, 1997, Kendall & Wickham, 1999) was an obvious contender, but this seemed to provide an approach rather than a method. In their recent overviews of discourse analysis, Wetherell, et al. (2001, 2001a) describe this broad field as one identifiable by attention to 'situated' knowledge, and to socio-political and cultural disciplines and signifiers.

I was not looking for a cookbook, but I did want to 'know what is good work in narrative researching' (Josselson, 1999, p.ix) and how to justify it. Much feminist discourse analysis (see: Wilkinson & Kitzinger (1996) for an overview and specific studies such as Lovering (1996) on menstruation and Cameron et al. (1999) exploring the 'regimes of truth' constructed in the social science texts around 'teenage mothers' and 'premenstrual tension), seemed to produce challenging and thought-provoking cultural commentaries. There seemed to be a lack of transparent discussion about how these accounts were constructed and transcribed, and about what was left out and the justifications for this. The process leading up to these final accounts seemed to be something of an 'arcane mystery' which left me positioned somewhere in between a dis-ease in terms of accountability to my colleagues and a dis-comfort with the possibility that I was not intellectually able enough to grasp these esoteric issues.

Some of the most powerful research narratives were emerging from the feminist/family therapy world, particularly the work of Laird and her team (1994, 1994a, 1998) and Hare-Mustin (1994), which had been influenced by the practices of narrative therapy.

White and associates (1990, 1995, 1997, 2000) had worked and re-worked a very available and transparent process of identifying, exploring and expanding a range of narrative domains in conversation. I eventually gravitated to combining this approach with, in particular, some of the methods of Riessman (1993) that had been used to good effect to analyse counselling conversations. I had, by default, come full circle in troubling the edges of the 'regimes' of research and practice as I was yet again using a therapeutic practice as a form of research outside the therapeutic arena.

Shaping the text

As soon as I began listening to the audiotapes, I was entering into a different relationship with my co-researchers and the stories that were emerging from our conversations. Transcription, a process that begins as soon as this listening process starts, is a process of interpreting, selecting and theorising (Ochs, 1979, Mischler, 1991, Riessman, 1993, Kvale, 1996). Readers may argue, quite legitimately, that it is a little late to make this observation, since I have already been representing 'cleaned up prose' versions of participants as this study has unfolded. In not already explicitly drawing attention to my selection and transcription of elements of the research conversations I

have been engaged with, I have been implicitly falling back on a standard assumption within interview cultures:

> 'The largely unexamined presupposition that a transcript provides a one-to-one match with the "reality" of the communicative event' (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999, p82).

The process of transcription is one of a series of interpretive acts that re-presents the text to readers in a form, style, and shape that has some meaning to the principal researcher as well as the co-researchers. This is a substantial re-telling. The ethical issues involved in the processes of transcription and re-presentation are immense and I struggled with these moments of ethical decision-making more than any other. In his treatise on narrative ethics, written from a primarily literary standpoint, Ellos (1994) observes that:

> 'walking into an ethical dilemma is like entering a thicket. It is not like entering a maze because a maze was constructed by someone, so we have the clear anticipation that there is a clear, yet complex way out. Given time and patience we should be able to find it. But a thicket has none of these presumptions of final clarity' (p26).

I felt very much 'in the thicket' with these issues. Most of what was collected during these conversations has not been used. Thousands and thousands of words have remained as 'field notes'. How can I justify this? Each period of time spent listening and making notes from the tapes produced different dimensions and perspectives. There is at least one whole other parallel Ph.D. project to be written from, and about, the stories that have not featured in this study and the overt and covert decision making process that was involved.

All the words and interpretations of meaning that have not been directly re-presented in the final text of this study, have in some way informed that process of distillation. As I listened again and again to the tapes of conversations I came across similar processes. All the conversations started with considerable input from me. This was followed by a period of two-way questions and answers. In all the interviews, however, I was able to identify 'core episodes', during which participants spoke very intensely, for a long period of time, with or without any interventions from me.

It is these central episodes the lead-up to them, and reflections upon them in the re-tellings a few weeks later that I have tried to capture in the narratives I have constructed within this thesis. I have also included the moments from the 're-telling interviews' that frequently occurred and that focussed on a critique or review of this research process as it took place. I describe this process of selection, transcription and negotiation with participants in some detail below. At the end of the day, viewed quantitatively, far more words were omitted than included in this study. Yet, what I have hoped to convey, through means of the transcriptions and re-presentations set out here, is a text that evokes and encompasses the richness of those texts in their entirety. In other words, the larger sum of the conversations informed the parts glimpsed upon and available in this study. In qualitative terms, I would hope that the purposes and meanings of those encounters were substantively conveyed in this text. I am also aware that a different researcher might have produced different transcriptions, as I might have at different moments in my own life.

I began to realise that all I could hope to achieve was transparency about the 're-authoring' process that took place during the transcription and re-presentation of this text, and draw attention to the further re-telling and re-authoring that is taking place now, subsequently, between myself as the writer and yourself as the reader.

Conversational Analysis

In a previous career as a teacher of deaf children, I had undergone considerable training in psycholinguistics and was familiar with many standard conventions for transcribing conversations with children and for representing both intelligible and obscure speech patterns and including prosodic and paralinguistic as well as verbal features of reported conversation (Bloom & Lahey, 1978, Bloom, 1993). I initially began to transcribe every feature of the tapes, using Well's (1975, 1985, pp417-422) guidelines for transcribing conversational language and analysing the more personal/local narratives according to Labov & Walesky's (1967) structural analysis of stories within conversation A –provide an abstract, O-orient the listener, CA-describe complicating action, E –evaluate meaning and R-resolve action.

This was a valuable, substantially submerged part of my research endeavour in that, as Lapadat Lindsay (1999) point out it was the 'listening and re-listening, viewing and reviewing'(p82) that enabled me to construct a more accessible transcript. Such a detailed transcription, however, was

beyond the scope of anything more than a single case study. Indeed, it was almost beyond the scope of my computer, and would have produced an unviable amount of text. The one colleague I showed this to was Nancy, the most experienced researcher. She was completely baffled by the phonetic and prosodic markers and curious about how people were going to give coherent feedback about what seemed to be incomprehensible transcriptions written in some esoteric code. This was the reverse of the effect that I had wanted. Many of the stories had moved me. The tapes contained what I heard as Nancy's stories of regret and hope, Morag's determination and despair, Lynn's resilience and anxiety, Donald's thoughtfulness and nonconformity, to name but a few. I did not want to reduce these stories to 'a statistics of qualitative research' (Bond 2000a).

I was reminded of Stubbs' (1983) work in sociolinguistics, and of the complex craft of translating conversation into a written text, since:

> 'conversation looks odd, incoherent and broken when seen in the written medium-but it does not sound odd to those taking part in it…the presentation of spoken interaction in the form of a transcription has therefore, an estrangement effect. We can see that the conversation is not so self-evidently coherent as we might have thought, but that the coherence is achieved through interpretation'(Stubbs, 1983, 228).

I was also aware of Mischler (1986) and Riessman's critique of Labov's (1972, 1982) understanding of stories as units of sociolinguistic meaning, at the expense of context and relationship. I would not wish to diminish the power of structural analyses of narratives, but rather to recognise that I am more interested in situating these narratives and in focusing my attention on people's constitutive experience of their narrative worlds. To quote Gerrig (1993), commenting on fictional narratives: 'My aim. By contrast, is to make evident exactly how pervasive the experience of narrative worlds can be (p7).'

How then, short of transferring my talents to documentary film production (a rich and underused research medium for counsellors) might I come up with a form of interpretation that allowed the power of these stories to emerge without 'cleaning up' the text so that it read like the perfect prose that Mischler (1991, p225) describes as 'naïve realism'?

I wanted the stories to read as powerfully as they sounded. I wanted my writing as an aspect of this inquiry to move towards what Lather (1995, pp54-57) has compellingly described as transgressive validity (of which 'rhizomatic' aspects unsettle from within and tap underground and 'voluptuous' aspects, go too far towards disruptive success and runaway risky practice). I had been 'blown way' by the auto-ethnographic writings of Ellis (1994, 1997) and her calls upon evocation as validity:

> 'in evocative storytelling, the story's validity can be judged by whether it evokes in you, the reader a feeling that the experience described is authentic, that it is believable and possible' (Ellis, 1994, p318).

These were not my stories but they were stories from my workplace and I felt part of them. I was writing this study from a specific, embedded position at a particular time and I wanted the text to reflect that position. According to Richardson (2000) poststructuralism brought many freedoms, including the freedom from 'trying to write a single text in which we say everything at once to everyone' (p929). I wanted to exercise these freedoms as a writer. I wanted to be able to impart the impact that the conversations I had been having with my colleagues had had *on me*, both in terms of a collective biography that I felt part of, and as a sequence of separate co-constructed stories. These texts expressed experiences of and in the narrative worlds of my colleagues, and I wanted to 'perform' them here as best I could (Gerrig, 1993).

Constructing and re-presenting a 'storied' text.

To quote Denzin (1999) after Foucault (1980, 1984) 'writing is not an innocent practice' (p, 568). How was I going to prioritise and then re-present the narratives that had emerged? I did not want to single out particular storytellers as 'representative' and thus assign some speakers authority and others less (as Bourdieu (1993) suggests is endemic in 'interview culture'). I wanted to include aspects of text that I found boring, irrelevant to my aims or that I 'instinctively' wanted to leave out. This was partly as a challenge to notions of 'successful and unsuccessful research narratives' (Jarvinen, 2000, p371) and the temptation to include 'resolved', 'transformative' or bizarre and exciting stories at the expense of mundane, everyday accounts (as I perceived them). It was also because my colleagues and myself had put so much collective effort into eliciting and validating these conversations that to leave anyone out felt both professionally unethical and organisationally

unwise. In the end the process of re-presenting the narratives was arrived at through a combination of listening to and transcribing texts in various ways (such as the first attempts outlined above) and immersing myself in the overlapping literatures of narrative analysis, narrative therapy, narrative research, life story and life history research, layered accounts and transcription. These were not easy choices to make and I might make them very differently if I was to enter this thicket again tomorrow.

Narrative analysis

A powerful body of work in the narrative analysis field is the work developed by Riessman (1990, 1991, 1994, 1993, 2000), extending the work of Labov & Waletzky (1967), Polanyi (1985), Gee (1986, 1991) and Mischler (1986, 1991) that has subsequently been developed by counselling researchers (Mcleod & Balamoutsou, 1996, 2001, Mcleod & Lynch, 2000) although often in unpublished texts (see: Leftwich 1998, Connor 1998 and Cooper, 2001). This method has much to offer researchers exploring all or part of an interview in depth or as a means of exploring aspects of interviews, or researchers prepared to extract one particular interview as 'representative' of others. Reissman (1990, 1993, 1994, 2000) elicits interviews 'representative' of experience, in this way. I had too much text to offer a line-by line analysis of my fifteen colleagues' conversations. I considered using this relatively 'tried and tested' approach to analyse one interview, possibly the final interview with Donald, as a more detailed exploration of the ways my reflections and deconstructive questions was, and was not helpful as an interviewing style. This would have been a very interesting contribution to explorations of counselling and of interview practice that I, or another researcher, might make in the future. In the meantime, however, the purposes of the study were to conduct an exploration of attitudes and identity claims around research and practice. I abandoned the idea of conducting a detailed 'line by line' narrative analysis, but was strongly influenced by the tradition and ethical position of keeping narratives whole (Mcleod & Balamoutsou, 1996), intact (Mischler, 1991, Reissman 1993) or holistic (Lieblich, et al, 1998, pp88-111) and of reading and rereading (in fact, listening and re-listening to) the text, identifying different narrative domains, points of entry into possible alternatives, and so forth. Although I did not single out 'representative' texts, I did then select particular sections, or 'episodes', for more detailed re-presentation. Research participants were consulted at each of these stages and their suggestions and amendments were always included (see: Table A, chapter three), but they were not

themselves involved in the extensive and time-consuming process of repeated listenings and the selection of what became known as the core texts.

Each of the conversations with my colleagues contained one or more long stretches of narrative (although not always stories, in the traditional sense). This often appeared two thirds of the way through the conversation and included little or no intervention from the interviewer. This long stretch that I came to identify, as the 'core text' was frequently the aspect of the conversation referred to in the re-telling two weeks later. I decided to represent each of these core texts in the stanza form advocated by Riessman (1993, after Gee, 1986, 1991), which I outline in more detail below.

I was relieved to be able to tap into this body of work, but equally I was aware that I was as interested in the ways in which culture and agency were mutually 'constitutive' of each other within narratives (Parry & Doan, 1994, pp11-44, White, 1995, 11-155) as in 'how events have been constructed by active subjects' (Riessman, 1993, p70). Riessman acknowledged the significance of cultural issues and contrasted this with 'personal' stories', but she was using a humanistic 'external/internal' metaphor for these story worlds and therefore did not have a poststructuralist concern about arriving at thin conclusions from a multi-storied text. I had already acknowledged of course (see Part One) that all Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) 'seven moments' co-exist in the present. I have been willing to enter into a conversation within this study, between different research paradigms 'not to accommodate or reconcile distinct paradigms but to recognise each as unique, historically situated forms of insight' (Tolman & Szalacha, 1999, pp9-10). I had, however, hoped in Part Three to demonstrate research practices that informed and were informed by the poststructuralist moment.

Archetypal life stories

Narrative researchers, including those above, together with narrative therapists, have developed ways of analysing different layers of meaning and landscapes of discourse across a range of texts, and of identifying different narrative genres. One body of researchers has grouped narratives according to the correspondence of their structure and content with the archetypal or mythological storylines and underlying life story myths and patterns that abound in (predominantly) western societies. There is a strong Ericksonian/ Jungian psychodynamic basis to this method, that

originates with McAdams and his associates (1985, 1991, 1993) and seeks out particular life story patterns such as 'transition' (McAdams, et al, 2001), 'redemption' (McAdams 2001), 'ambition' (Ochberg and Corneau, 2001) and Frank's (1995) 'restitution, quest and chaos' narratives in exploring illness, that has also been taken up by Etherington (2000) in exploring narratives of abuse and Farmer (2002, in press) in exploring bereavement narratives. These are powerful texts, many of them subject to stringent 'member checking' processes, but as a researcher conducting a substantively participative study, I stood more comfortably alongside texts that had openly invited stories around a particular given or familiar theme in advance. Gullestad's (1996) 'everyday life philosophers' who were openly invited to write their lives, or the sexual love stories collected from Finland (Haavio-Mannila, 1999) are examples of this more participatory and explicit analysis of structure and content. Similarly, studies that used the 'local language' of participants, rather than archetypal storylines from literary or psychodynamic theory, to analyse texts, as in Lather & Smithies' (1997) 'Angel stories' collected from women with HIV/AIDS, seemed less prescriptive.

The notion of 'archetypal stories' was useful to some researchers. Reissman (1993) for example, cites White's (White, H, 1973) literary plots of tragedy, comedy, romance and satire as the archetypal forms into which 'tellers pour their ordinary lives (p19)'. These ideas perhaps collided with my own discomfort with more culturally bound and 'essentialist' notions of what it means to be human, although I did find the narrative metaphor a useful means of exploring the ways people organised and even constituted their lives. I was reminded of Sarris's (1994) seminal conversation with Mabel McKay, the Native American Indian who was the subject of his anthropological life story research:

> GS: 'A theme is a point that connects all the dots, ties up all the stories'.
>
> MM: 'That's funny. Tying up all the stories. Why would somebody want to do that?'
>
> GS: 'when you write a book there has to be a story, or idea, a theme…'.
>
> MM: 'Well, theme. I don't know nothing about. That's somebody else's rule' (p5).

Identifying narrative domains.

I was more drawn to the analysis of narratives as discourse, often given by narrative therapists, and in the interplay between culture and agency and the significance of the liminal space between them (Law & Madigan, 1998, Madigan, 1998).

The narratives I collected (or should I say co-authored) did not seem to fit into patterns of archetypal myth or life story patterns, or alternatively I did not find it useful to notice these patterns. These were definitely narratives in the sense of chronologies that carried personal and cultural meaning, albeit, discontinuous, interrupted chronologies that were not necessarily told in linear form. They were often fragmented, interconnected and circular (see: Metzger, 1986, Connelly & Clandinin 1990, and Oliver, 1998). I did find, after many hours of listening to the conversations, that I was able to form an analysis of personal /habitual stories, as differentiated from culturally dominant stories, as differentiated from emergent/alternative/re-authored stories.

These differentiated narratives were informed by the works of those cited above, but also by some of the most transparent feminist discourse analysts, such as Dell & Papagiannidou (1999), exploring ten Greek women's accounts of hysterectomy, Carabine (2001) exploring histories and genealogies of 'single parenting' in Britain and Weatherall & Priestley' s (2001) study of the discourses that shape the lives of sex workers in New Zealand. This form of analysis lent itself to the construction of broader and more collective narratives and organisational/ professional life story research (see: Czarniawska, 1997, 1998 for similar constructs of 'narrating organisations' and Davies, 2000, pp11-145 on collective life story work).

Narrative therapy might also be seen as a form of 'live' Foucauldian discourse analysis (see White & Epston, 1990,pp1-37, White, 1993, Elliot, 1997 and Bird, 2000, pp1-167). The narratives that White, (1997, pp117-172) describes as the dominant stories in people's lives or national or professional cultures might also be described by Foucault (1980) as the regimes of truth: the culturally acceptable and assumed narratives of the context. Narrative therapists consider the differentiation between these dominant stories, more local, experience-near stories and alternative or emergent stories as significant aspects of their work. Definitions of dominant stories are similar to the 'ordinary stories' identified by Reissman (2000) and the 'habitual' stories identified by Polanyi (1985) and Reissman (1991). These are the regular, routine and 'culturally available'

(White and Epston, op.cit, pp27-33) stories that people tell about themselves. People also tell, and can be encouraged to tell, more local, experience-near stories (White,1989, McKenzie & Monk, 1997) or personal stories, as also identified by Polanyi (1985). Often preferred, alternative or emerging stories may occur in the process of re-telling dominant and in particular more local or personal stories. Angus & Hartke (1994), from a more humanistic 'inner self' perspective, identifies these as 'reflexive' stories.

My method of constructing stories then, owed as much if not more to traditionally therapeutic as to traditionally research-based practices. This felt perfectly in keeping with constructs of narrative therapy as co-research with clients and has been sustained by the proposed blurring of research and practice genres by McGuire (1999), Moodley (2001) and Kvale (1999) cited in Part Two (p, 94) This was, then, perhaps not as unsettling and runaway a 'risky practice' as I had aspired to and Lather (1995) had advocated.

As an approach to constructing stories, the practices of narrative therapy, embedded within the history of poststructuralist and feminist ideas, offered what I had been searching for, and in a sense, had already begun in my explorations into narrative questioning and interviewing. Narrative questioning, as explored in Chapter Seven, may 'extort' certain narrative domains, in the same way that Rennie (2001), quoting Westcott, suggests that IPR may 'extort' reflexivity. These practices 'lent themselves' to a study where research was seen as an active, participatory or even emancipatory endeavour and a two-way process between researcher and participants (co-researchers). The practices of narrative therapy, as they had been conceived so far, however, seemed to lack corresponding practices of transcription and re-presentation of text, which was surprising in a therapy approach that, more than any other, relied on literary means (White & Epston, 1990) and the use of therapeutic documents (Epston & White, 1992, pp7-27) as well as oral exchanges.

Cultural, local and emerging stories.

This decision-making process took the best part of two years of intense scrutiny backwards and forwards between the audio-taped conversations and the literatures cited above. I was not, however, entirely out of the thicket. Each of these narrative domains (the cultural, the local and the

emergent) was multi-storied and contained a plethora of possibilities for analysis. At this point my choices were determined by the nature of the research questions I was asking In the course of my travels back and forth across the tapes I had developed some sense of an overall narrative over time that seemed to give a sense of the development of ideas about research and practice across the generations of counselling trainers. I seemed, at first, to be constructing a kind of professional life history. I attempted to chart this particular 'dominant story' across the generations present at the University of Bristol, from *pioneers*, to *entrepreneurs* to *established professionals*. I discovered that these groupings were too fluid and overlapping to be useful, but that there might be a difference emerging between the identity claims of the first wave of counsellor educators and colleagues who entered an established profession some time later.

Emergent, alternative and preferred stories also abounded at different points for different people, and not at all for some. Many of these become transparent within the core texts in the next chapters and I have mapped many of their trajectories in my accounts.

I have presented each of these episodes or core texts in full, although I have removed reflecting and affirming and overlapping comments from myself and the phatics or 'social oil' (e.g.: and so? uhuh, yeah yeah, hmm, Mmm) on the part of both interviewer and interviewee. These core texts are taken from the initial interviews and in most cases are followed with something of their re-telling two weeks later. There is a range of narrative domains included in all these texts, but they also focus on the local, personal, experience-near stories that people told about themselves. In some cases these stories had a similar focus to my own, in others, for example, Sonya's story, they were not directly related to this inquiry from my perspective, but were nonetheless very much the personal stories that needed to be told at the time.

The final picture was incomplete, not all sides of the crystal were in the light, and the view was distorted, but then this was not 'the answer' to questions about narrative inquiry or about inquiries into the relationship between therapeutic and research practices. The stories that eventually appeared in this study were carefully constructed. I hope I have gone some way to make the process of shaping this text transparent , through giving attention to my own and participant's voices, the voices of other researchers and back again. At the same time, I make no claims for a 'monolithic' thesis. These are 'some' stories, not 'the' stories. What I have attempted is: 'to strive to place [my] work in some ongoing dialogue - as a genuine conversation with other work'

(Josselson, 1999, xi) and to interrogate, through this process of discovery, the cultural production of research and therapy as differentiated practices.

Transcription and poetics

During this period of construction of the narratives, having abandoned my attempts to produce a full sociolinguistic analysis of the conversations, I did not produce any further written transcriptions, but rather went back and forth jotting down notes, single words or phrases, occasionally whole sentences jumbled up with comments of my own. In the main, I was listening, rather than formally transcribing, although these are, of course, overlapping activities. As Ochs (1979) had attested some twenty years previously in her seminal paper on the transcription of oral conversations with children 'as theory': transcription is a form of translation from one (related) language to another (ibid, p44). Transcription is in a sense a research method in that it is 'a selective process reflecting theoretical goals and definitions' (ibid, p44). Ochs (1979), Riessman (1993), Mischler (1991), Denzin (1995) and Kvale (1996) as well as Lapadat & Lindsay (1999) in their useful overview of transcription practices, all refer to the construction of a transcript as a re-interpretation, re-telling or reconstruction of the text. By the time I came to transcribe the texts that I had been listening to, I had many of the 'story moments' that had resonated powerfully ringing in my head. The intonation, uses of silence, repetition and different dialects were all part of the texts as I read them, but hard to reproduce in accessible ways. Take this opening moment from Morag's core text:

> *'I mean I always think there are reasons why people are at particular places. Mine is to do with unresolved stuff around my intellect and to do with having...Oh, I felt a sensor then. Having a breakdown when I was at university and losing a sense of...losing my mind. And that had very kind of physical...it had effects on me. Like every time I started to walk into the University I sort of...I became very clouded. I stopped being able to read. So very powerful. I had very powerful associations with the University, and with not being able to function. I also come from a family of intellects and felt very inferior when I was growing up, and felt very stupid, and really only in perhaps the last 10 - 15 years*

have I begun to feel as if I have a brain. That I can think logically and I can make sense. I can understand things.'

Lapadat & Lindsay's (p82) plea for a closer examination of 'transcription as a theory-laden component of qualitative analysis' is still timely, twenty years after Ochs (1979) first drew attention to these issues. Many excellent researchers in the field of narrative inquiry pay little attention to methods of transcription. Sadly, this is commonly the case with the life-story approach (Ginsburg, 1989, Bruner, 1990, Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) including the excellent contributions of Lieblich and her team (1993, 1995, 1998) and of her collaborators, Josselson (1992, 1993) and McAdams (1993, 2001), despite their good attention to the 'ethics and process' (Josselson, 1996) of narrative inquiry.

Ochs (1979) explores the ways in which text is displayed according to cultural expectations such as the left to right bias in English texts (and vice versa in Hebrew) and comments on the ways in which position in the text often reinforced the powerful role of adult researchers in conversations with children. I took heed of these issues and after some experimentation with different fonts, etc, decided to display my own interventions in texts in 'bold' to somehow denote the power relations that existed in the conversation, as in this extract from Liz's re-telling:

*J.S. How **do you think you were feeling at the time?***

LIZ: I think it, I think that it, I think its part of something; I think the interview is part of something

J.S. is it part of your journey? I had a feeling it was…

LIZ: It's like it's got, it's like it's in the middle. RIGHT. Your interviews in the middle

J.S. Well interestingly I suppose, apart from, apart from you individually, the interview, by accident, is in the middle of something that's happening to us all,

But it is also in the middle of something that's going on for you very personally may be?

LIZ: Well it's a number of things, I don't know, but there's just something, there's been something around for me this term about feeling angry at some of these stories

I was particularly influenced by the contribution of Gee (1986, 1991) to discussions about transcription, , as were Riessman (1993) and other counselling researchers in the field. I am particularly grateful to Danchev (1998) for her excellent introduction to these ideas and to her

former colleagues (Mcleod & Balamoutsou, 1996, 2000 and Mcleod, 2001) for producing transcripts of counselling conversations that met Ellis's (1995) criteria of 'evocation as a means of knowing'p318) . Gee argues that an idealized 'poetic' transcription of speech is more akin to and evocative of oral language than prose. He argues, (after Aristotle (1932edn) and alongside Mair (1989), Rimmon –Kennan (1983) and Katz & Shotter (1996) that a poetic sensibility towards language, a sensibility towards the gaps and pauses that are evocative of meaning, (as used in ancient Greek poetry and drama both originally oral traditions) is the written form most akin to spoken language. Gee (1991) advocates a poetic style of transcription of speech in stanza form, that follows closely the pauses, silences and emphases of speech and in this way evokes richer and more accessible meanings than in the 'cleaned up' or smoothed prose of most transcriptions, wherein: 'language is used as a transparent medium, useful primarily to get to underlying content' (Riessman, 1993, p31). This highlights a contested aspect of narrative inquiry, between those who view language, storying and/or discourse as *representative* of meaning, and those who viewed language, storying and/or discourse as *constitutive* of meaning. Re-presenting the core texts in stanza form evoked powerful and enthusiastic responses from participants, who found this version a far thicker description than either the sociolinguistically complex or smoothed prose versions:

> *' I found it clearer, not so rambling and clumsy, and I could hear myself speaking in those phrases (Heather, 1999)*

I found that the stanza form also seemed closer to the voices that I had singing in my head. Here, for example, is Morag's powerful opening moment again. This time re-presented in stanza form:

I mean I always think there are reasons
why people are at particular places,
mine is to do with
unresolved stuff around my intellect
and
to do with having,

oh I felt a sensor then,

having a breakdown when I was at university
and losing a sense of
losing my mind

and that had very kind of physical,
it had effects on me

like every time I started to walk
into the university

I sort of

I became very clouded,
I stopped being able to read,

So
very powerful,
I had very powerful associations
with the university, and with not being able to function

I also come from a family of intellects
and felt
very inferior when I was growing up
and felt very stupid
and really only
in perhaps the last 10 - 15 years
have I begun
to feel as if
I have a brain.
That I can think logically and I can make sense
I can understand things.

This is not just a verbatim translation, attending to paralinguistic features. It seems to create a richer, more meaning-laden text. Thus, a poetic shaping of the text seemed to bring the richer, more varied, more multi storied possibilities in this conversation into centre stage.

The core texts have been transcribed in stanza form. Other extracts from the conversations are represented for the most part in 'smoothed' prose, except where they include moments from the core texts. This 'bricolage' has enabled me to illustrate the power and complexity of some of the stories and at the same time include a greater range of text in a more condensed form.

Layered accounts.

And what of my writer's voice? In some senses I felt that Richardson's (2001, p924) call to create texts that are vital and make a difference had been met by the transcription of the core texts. I put my heart and soul into these transcriptions and felt that the process had evoked in me a new and heightened understanding of the term empathy. I had gone some way towards discovering that:

> 'In taking such care we will have to free ourselves enough to imagine how things may be beyond the ways we have been taught not to see and not to say' (Mair, 1989, p13)

It is beyond the scope of this study, perhaps, to dwell too much on its enormous side effects, but it seems worth mentioning that my clients and I now find it useful to use this style of transcription to

record particular moments within my therapeutic practice. I have also been reflecting on its uses in the initial training of counsellors and/or the training of narrative practitioners.

In Morag's story (above) for example, points of entry can be identified towards de-constructing ideas of breakdown and not being able to function, towards expanding local, experience-near stories of becoming clouded and stopping being able to read, and towards emerging, alternative past stories of *not* losing her mind outside the university precincts and current stories of having a brain, thinking logically and making sense. These points of entry are available through interrogating 'meaning' in spoken language, but also by attending to paralinguistic features. This becomes more evident in transcribing the text in poetic ways that attend to intonation, rhythm, pause and silence. Speakers seem to provide markers to these 'points of entry' in their use of paralinguistic features. These comments are speculative and tentative, although they have some connection with research into 'expressing the not-said' (Rogers, A, 1992, Rogers, et al, 1999) in conversation and studies of client's agency in therapy (Rennie, 2001). It would be interesting to research more thoroughly the role of 'clients' as agents in their own therapy in this particular way, and the virtues of making these ideas explicit in the training of practitioners and in the production of therapeutic documents.

My 'writers voice' has clearly been engaged in this whole process of creating, co-creating and re-creating texts alongside my colleagues. I also wanted a space to record some of my analysis of the texts and the impact that these conversations had on me, without either diminishing or privileging my account over and above those of my co-researchers (I was back, once again, with Clandinin & Connelly (1994), deliberating over the power of signatures in personal experience methods.

It had been something of a disappointment to discover that the challenging ideas that Lather had expressed in 1991 had not been backed up with a body of practices in the realms of selecting and transcribing text. I was, nonetheless, impressed with Lather's (1995) refusal 'to theorize or tell tidy narratives or stories (p, 57)' (although I still felt quite wedded to the untidy narratives and divergent conversations that this study had, so far, created) and her challenge to the way we organise and communicate knowledge. She and her co-researcher, Smithies (Lather & Smithies, 1997), had done this by juxtaposing a running researcher's subtext along the bottom third of the pages of her study with fragments of stories and conversations from and with her research participants along the top two thirds of the page. This was interspersed with seminal extracts from

an array of literatures dotted throughout the text in boxes (Lather & Smithies, 1997). This layered account definitely troubles the edges of privilege and priority in terms of particular aspects or voices within a research study. Readers were invited to experiment with multiple readings in different ways that 'invite multiple entry and multiple meanings' (Lather, 1995, p58). Lather and Smithies do not attempt to resolve, but rather to accentuate and 'trouble' notions not only about 'giving voice' to others, but also about researchers both getting out of the way and getting in the way' (Lather & Smithies, 1995, p,xiv). Their purposes in these experiments are attempts to situate their researcher voices and autobiographical voices amongst the many voices within their study, some of which have been represented as single-storied and others as multi-storied narratives, or fragments of narratives. I found this work very exciting, and also felt reconfirmed in my commitment to producing a study that included a range of voices, merged voices, and shifts in paradigm, style and method as it unfolded. When I first came across Lather's work, I was tempted towards all sorts of 'cut and paste' experiments with my own thesis that made further shifts, not only with the different participant, scholar, researcher, writer and wolf-woman voices, but also with chronology and page layout. What if, like the narratives of many film scripts and novels, I started with the denouement, and the thesis became a series of flashbacks providing a layering of meaning? I noticed that many of my participant's stories moved backwards and forwards in fragments across time in this way, often leaving gaps (see: Rimmon-Kenan 1983, pp116-131 and White & Epston, 1990, pp 77-163, after Bruner, 1986, for explorations from literary theory, narrative therapy and narrative psychology of the significance of spaces in stories in which both tellers and listeners can perform alternative or richer meanings). I reminded myself that Lather and Smithies (1997) had described their work as a 'difficult read' and that I was attempting to write an accessible study.

I was still drawn to the ideas of a layered account, which in some senses describes this entire endeavour. Ronai (1992, 1998, 1999) has developed a less structurally challenging text layout, which nonetheless acknowledges the process whereby 'as each layer of text is superimposed on the others, each layer contributes to the understanding of the other layers as well as the overall picture of social life that the text conveys' (Ronai, 1999, p116). In producing her accounts, Ronai engages with Derrida's (1983) idea that meanings exist with reference to other meanings in a range of connected and disjointed ways: She juxtaposes one layer of text after the other, after the other,

without elaboration or explanation. I have used this way of writing in Chapters Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen (but nowhere else in the study) as a means of juxtaposing the participant's core texts, their retellings and my own retellings, in a layered account. Having ended this chapter at this point, it seems fitting to move straight to those core texts and explore the local, dominant and emerging stories that are available within them.

Chapter Nine--Core texts from Alexia, Nancy, Morag, Heather and Lynn

The core texts set out in the next three chapters could be read in any order. As a reader you could legitimately skip the layers of my writer's accounts and concentrate solely on participant's stories and the critical and imaginative readings of them that emerge in your own head. Each core text is made up of part of the conversation with each of my colleagues, together with additional text from the follow-up to this conversation that usually took place one or two weeks later. The core texts are not necessarily 'representative'. They have not been chosen in anyway because of their content. These moments have been chosen because they were moments when people seemed to have got into their 'flow' as storytellers. Each core text includes different combinations of dominant/habitual, local/personal and alternative/emerging stories. My own accounts analyse the narrative domains that I perceived us entering in these conversations as well as some of the possibilities that might have emerged if I had asked different questions. I explored some of the issues that resonated for me and set out some of the ideas that I was developing over time as each layer informed the next.

The texts have been set out in the chronological order in which the conversations took place. In this sense they form a cumulative story of their own as each layer of conversation and writing informs and overlaps the next. The first five texts are from conversations with my closest colleagues. The second and third groups of stories in Chapters Twelve and Thirteen are from conversations with people I know less intimately. The conversations with Heather, Clare, James, Donald and Lynn took place at the University of Bristol. Conversations with Alexia, Morag, Nancy, Sonya, Paul and Trish took place in their homes; those with Grace, Dora and Liz took place at my home and with Andy at his workplace. I am not sure if the physical context made a difference. It seemed that being positioned between clients, as in the case of Trish and Andy, might have influenced events and both the initial conversations with James and Clare and the follow-up conversation with Grace also took place just before they started teaching. The other conversations were often within a more flexible timescale. The interviews themselves all took about 90 minutes (except for Alexia and Andy) and the retellings about 30 minutes (except for Alexia, Nancy and Donald) but people often stayed on to 'chat' afterwards.

My purpose in presenting these texts is to convey to you, the reader, a sense of being transported into and by the narrative worlds of the participants in this study. As the first reader of these texts I found myself 'performing' the meanings of these stories. I made use of my own experience of the world to bridge the gaps in the text (Bruner, 1986, pp16-28). I am now inviting you to perform these texts in the same way and hope that you become sufficiently lost in this book, at least from time to time, to experience being transported into the narrative worlds of these storytellers and to :

> 'go some distance from your world of origin, which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible and return to the world of origin somewhat changed by the journey' (Gerrig, 1993, p11)

Alexia's story-the core text

Because I came
From a family
Whereby I didn't have a voice of my own,

I'm learning to trust my own *instincts*
Much more,
And when I do
It seems to work.

Actually I've done much
I'm doing much more
Than I'm being paid for,

But it's about; it's something about payment
But I suppose
It's more than the payment,

It's about being **appreciated**
It's about **belonging** to a community
It's about
Being
Part of something,

Which I work better at
I think
I mean I'm a loner as well,
I like that part

That independence
And that ability to be alone.
But there's something about....

I use the library totally on my own
Which I just find that,
I think that
There shouldn't be just 'face to face' paid time
For working with students,

If we're really going to have tutors
Who are **really** bringing in their best?
Then
Also

There's something about that being acceptable
About that being a very **important** part of your job.

Does that make sense?

I don't know how much is the *University*
And how much is being a part time tutor
In a place
Where
I don't feel as if
< Very long pause>

I have lots of reasons,
But I feel as if I could **actually** do,
Be much more part of a team,
Like Henry invited me to

So there's something about needing to *feel safe*
And belonging
And able to have influence

I suppose
But
There's something about

Being included,
Something about
For me it's important,
It's **incredibly**

It might suit other people very well
Not to belong
And it's not the way I work,
It's not the way I'm best
And actually I think that isn't just me,

And I think also it had
To do with the re-accreditation
Although I've been teaching here for two years
I am not included in that discussion
Not at all…
So there's something about feeling a bit….
And I don't work well like that

I feel as if I want to **grapple** with
Working as a team
Actually there aren't that many of us
That are diploma tutors

I mean it's very difficult for me to divorce
How I feel about this
Because of history,

And the way the Diploma's run,
Which is very different, from Henry's
< Very long pause>

It's not about power exactly
It's much more about ***influence***
And actually I realise,
I'm actually quite a good co-tutor
Without having power,
It's about I think
For me not being able to divorce
I can't divorce from, what?
How it could be different?
I don't as yet

I'm not working at my best,
And because I don't like that.
I can't see that I would be,
I don't see how I could be in a team and work and do research.
I do think I've got a lot to offer
And I know I'm not giving as much as I can…
I feel really, really sad somehow.

Because I do think that I've got a lot to offer
And I'm not,
I know that I'm **not** giving as much as I can.
I feel really,
I feel sad somehow.

I don't feel a colleague,
I feel a part time teacher who comes in and
And,
Being a colleague is actually important to me.
So the being and the belonging
Sounds a bit precious
It's not really

I'm working as a co-trainer

Is that something you can, fix?
Is it like a marriage?

In the end you actually say
'Well we don't have the right chemistry…
Or is it something that you do have the power to fix,
There is the potential for that
And we go on working for it,
We're going through a difficult **patch** but
We'll come out of the other end.

Or do we say actually we need a divorce?

I'm **full** of all this
And as I was,

Re-telling Alexia's story one week later

And this is my big thing about doubting myself
When I was talking to you,
Am I doing it right or something?
And you said, "I don't know",

You know
I mean it's a flippant remark
But there's something about…
Was I doing it all right for you?
Having to get it right so that you've got the material that you wanted
And not being sure that this was what you wanted
Or what you needed
Or whatever
So there was something still in me which was not sure what
Really quite what I was meant to be doing,
So that kicks in.

JS ***Feeling you needed a reassurance that you're on the right track, yeah. And what if you were… what if this was what you were meant to be doing? What would that be like?***

And that is an old,
Old pattern,
Do I make?
'Does that make sense'?
Is a phrase I use a huge amount

Because I can't believe that I'm putting something across *articulately,*
Or that my own thoughts are valid
And I'm only learning now that in fact they are,
So it's,

It's something about I use it much less
But I got into that at that moment
And because you know it's **your** research
And I want you to get the best you know
Do all that sort of stuff

Co-Constructing Alexia's story: A second re-telling

Alexia was re-telling an 'old' or habitual story that she frequently told about herself in her family, a family where she did not have 'a voice of her own' and where she had not always felt included, or that she belonged. She was also telling a very personal local story about her experiences as a core diploma tutor who did not feel included, powerful or part of the team. She acknowledged that she was only part-time, but was also firm in her declaration that this was more than a contractual or pay roll issue. Some of these expressions echoed the stories that Sonya was to tell later and the

issues raised by Paul. A sense of powerlessness and of a poor contract with the university seemed to be a dominant and even dominating story.

Her local 'research story' was one of sadness that although she had a lot to offer, she did not see how she could be in a team and do research under these circumstances. There were, however, points of entry to alternative stories. She knew she was a good tutor, and it would have been interesting to ask what sustained her in this knowledge. Furthermore, Henry's diploma and his invitation to be in a team had her feeling and acting very differently. She also expressed a curiosity about the ways in which being in a diploma team was like being in a marriage and extended this metaphor to wonder whether it was something that could be fixed. I might have asked something like: If you did have the power and potential to fix this marriage, how might you do it and what would it look like? But I did not. This personal story, about belonging and not belonging in the staff group was of great concern to her at the time of the first interview, in particular. She was 'full of this'

A week later her concerns were different and the dominant story was about getting it right for me. She seemed concerned that she had not got it right for me and that I might not get the material I wanted. She expressed a concern, which was later expressed by several of her colleagues, particularly Lynn and Liz that she was not doing what she was meant to be doing. This had me wondering about assumptions and cultures around 'research'. I was interested to know, and asked Alexia: 'If you discovered that you were doing what you were meant to be doing, what would that be like' She started to respond with what seemed to be a habitual story about not making sense or believing in her own articulacy, but an alternative story emerged about her thoughts being valid. If there had been more time, it would have been interesting to find out more about this new development and perhaps thicken these stories of validity and articulacy. What did emerge was that these 'old' stories were places that she stepped into much less these days, but had done so on this occasion, because she was anxious to sustain and support me as best she could in my research. My later comment that this kind of concern about my project would be very much the kind of support that I would hope for in a research and work team and that the kinds of questions she had asked such as:

- 'What is to do with the university and what is to do with being a part-time tutor?
- How could it be different?

- Are counselling training teams like families or marriages?
- Do I make sense?
- Is it possible to be as honest as possible and at the same time 'get it right' for a colleague and friend who is researching you?'

seemed to me, at least, to be both legitimate and interesting research questions. This left Alexia looking very startled.

The first conversation, which took place in Alexia's workroom, was a very emotionally charged and tearful experience. The conversation nudged several issues into the arena, such as belonging, being valued and having a decent working contract, that were to recur in subsequent interviews. Some of the ways that Alexia expressed these stories aroused my curiosity about both professional and gender politics. It is not unusual for women to feel less capable or for practitioners to feel less privileged, in an academic climate. In the re-telling two weeks later, Alexia's concerns were more about having 'got it right ' for me. Issues of getting these research conversations 'right' and 'appropriate ' and 'proper' were frequently expressed during this study and perhaps expressed dominant ideas about research interviews.

I was very moved by Alexia's story and also by the subsequent position she took up as a supportive member of this research team. Both these interviews ran over. The first was two hours and the second nearly an hour. This was the first conversation in the fifteen and was a pivotal moment in the process of this research study. Alexia's story was rich in meaning and was highly emotionally charged, which was not what I had expected. This was her opportunity to voice these issues, regardless of 'my agenda'. There was one phrase from this conversation that was to resonate with me throughout the next two years:

> I don't see how I could be in a team and work and do research.
> I do think I've got a lot to offer
> **And I know I'm not giving as much as I can...**
> I feel really, really sad somehow.

I felt really sad too, that one of the staff group seemed to have become so isolated. It was only later; looking at the transcript, that I noticed a point of entry to what might have been a rich source of other stories that I had not asked about. Alexia also thought that she had a lot to offer. I later wished that I had noticed what she had said and asked her what it was she had to offer and in what circumstances she might have been able to offer it.

Nancy's story-the core text

It immediately feels like two things,

Quite powerful,

excitement, stimulation and sadness.

Because I'm old.

JS: Oh god Nancy, how old are you? Perhaps that doesn't matter if that's how you feel.

I'm 57.

JS And that feels old, it feels like somebody else will get the rich pickings, the harvest.

It's not so much the rich pickings,

but,

because I'm not so sure about

whether there will be rich pickings or not,

JS I didn't mean that in wealth terms, more in terms of fulfilment.

Fulfilment, yeah.

It feels like blazing a trail

that somebody else is going

and going that much further on it

because they will have

some energy to put into it,

and take it that much further in the process,

and you know I think

"I've got some time left"

And then I get into

"well if I do that I'll have to give up something else,

what can you give up you don't want to give up - nothing".

And it brings up this whole bloody existential thing

you know
life is not long enough,
there's not enough **time** for me.
And I'm not ready yet,
and yet you know,
reality is that I'm getting to retirement age,

and I haven't even started,
it's quite shocking really,
quite upsetting

men on MSc. courses
are younger than women on MSc. courses
on the whole.

And you know,
all that goes with age,
you know,
the grandparent-hood, times that were for them,
wanting for them

That physical tiredness.
but almost like you know, also having,
I mean for me it feels like I've almost got too much,

I don't mean too much to do,
I mean **too many richnesses**.
You know, and having to choose from richnesses.

It's hard,
because you know,
I want to write, I really want to write,
but I don't just want to write academia,
and yet you know I'm struggling with

I mean it's just wanting so much,
Wanting everything

JS…and is some of that everything that you are wanting recognition as a researcher, would that be right?

I have an image of a researcher,
it's somebody actually sitting at a desk with a computer,
quite focused, that's one image,
and immediately that comes and it goes
and it's actually much more like somebody with a magnifying glass,
you know, like the image of Sherlock Holmes
So if I was to start from that image and think about a counselling researcher,
the image that comes to mind is something quite ridiculous really but I was,
I don't know where it comes from,
it's a mother looking under the bed, looking for the fluff,
you know that's gathered there
and finding a Scarab beetle, I wonder where that came from.
A fat, womanly woman,
a womanly figure with a large backside sticking up,
you know, and bedroom slippers on.

Under the bed
A jewel in this big ball of fluff,
you know, when you haven't cleaned under the bed for a long time.

you know it feels like I have come home to research.
I feel like I've spent most of my life trying to find out,

trying to sort of make sense of my own world,
you know, and heal myself and it's like the circle goes on,

And of course that's something that I was kind of unprepared for
which has actually proved to be my next learning age
because people ask me to talk at conferences now
and it's really scary and I know that that's the next,
that's the thing that I have to go on developing and learning
and people expect me to be able to do it, you know,

you've done this research,
you've produced the findings so you can stand up and talk about it.
And how exposed, how exposed....
when you stand up there, it's really scary...
So that's very much part of my research activity.

but you know the idea of having, of having a,
you know going into work,
going into the counselling arena
and having people there who are researching
and say meeting them in the morning
and saying how are you getting on,

what's happening?
where are you up to?

God, you know,
I had this *amazing time* last week when this happened,
and having people there who know what I know
and more different things,
who could say well you know

What about this?
what about that?
and I could see that I could actually gain so much from that.
I **could** actually. I suppose one of the things that's really amazed me about myself
and I've never quite believed and got used to is
you know, encapsulated
when I sat in the great hall and at the Degree ceremony for my Ph.D.
I mean it's ME!
Little old me, actually getting a Ph.D.
it's just ridiculous you know, and actually it's not ridiculous
because I can do it, you know,
and it's like the expansion of possibility that just goes on
and realising because I can do it, you know,
and it's like the expansion of possibility that just goes on
and realising:

YES you can do this!
and I'm not bad at it, I can do it quite well...And...It's the kind of possibilities,
You know,
The *excitement* and possibility

And no way knowing where that happened

Re-telling Nancy's story one week later

it's all old stuff you know,
it's all old stuff around time running out and,
and the sort of imminence of death
and all that stuff
and the am I ever going to have enough time to do all the things I needed
to make up for,
so it's' it's sort of about death really.
And still, it's not about dying,
it's about not living,
It's about living being short,
and there's anger in there
and you know that it's taken me **so long**
to get where I want to be
you know, anger at all sorts of things
and all sorts of people.
there was something about your response too,
I don't know what I felt about that.
I almost thought you were laughing at me,
you know,
that there was a kind of laughing in your voice
there was a "oh god Nancy"
with a laugh in your voice
and I suppose that fed into the old shit,
you know, I've let myself down,
or I'm being laughed at
which is all old script,
you know.
Betrayed,
it's the old feeling, fooled.
You know
having trusted and then being.....
had my legs knocked from *underneath* me,
and a familiar sort of.....

And there's something in it about you and me,
you know, this thing, whatever it is that's difficult between you and me,
and it's stuff to do with mother, my mother,
so you know I understand that,
but anyway, and then I was a bit, we went on.....

Yeah, you said something about it doesn't matter,
you were sort of, you know,
you don't have to say how old you are if you don't want to,
I thought, I don't mind saying how old I am,
you know it's not,
it's not about my age; it's about how I feel,
and then I thought, you know,
you don't really understand Jane, this isn't about my age,
I can say that if I want to, it's easy,

I'm 57
and that's that and that's not an issue.

Yeah, the that it almost,
I almost wanted to laugh when you said
'Rich pickings'

having been married to a researcher all these years,
you know, and actually understood the reality of that,

you know, that's not what it's about,
but something about the fulfilment that was a much,
that was a word I could really connect, it rescued,
It brought me back to feeling **understood** actually that word,

so it kind of set me back on track again.
And I realise now in listening to that,
that some of that anger was also about
my own experience and the lack of support
and you know the whole of the negative aspect of that
and, that almost a sense of
why the fucking hell couldn't somebody have been there to help me
sort of thing....

and having trodden this path, I know, I mean I do know,
really genuinely,
the value of that for other people
because lots of people want to talk about it now

and want to think about it for themselves
and it does feel really it's a useful thing to have done,
you know,
for others who are wanting to come after
and I'm glad about that, because I wouldn't want anybody else

I'm glad that I have been able to do some of that,
and actually to shift that process somewhere,
but I would have liked something for me at that point that I didn't get,

I'm not ready yet,
I can remember saying this in therapy
when I was dealing with all this stuff around dying
and that, you know, -
and I can remember saying
I'm not ready yet, I haven't finished
you know,

and there's this sort of image
of me sitting up at 99 on my death bed saying,
but I haven't finished yet.

I've got to remember this, you know,
this big thing I had on the M.Sc.
about all these men
who were being supported by women at home looking after **their** children,
years younger than most of the women who were there,
and in some way,
oh this sounds a terrible thing to say, is the tape on?

I was going to say of inferior quality to the women.
Without exception I think,
I would say that, hastily scanning,

but nobody comes to mind who I would have made an exception of I don't think.

I mean you know, I can remember thinking it then
and I still think it now
and because that was a course for people in management positions
and supervisory positions,
they were the men in those positions,
because they were men on the whole,

And there were women like Patty and I
who had kind of brought up our kids and done our part time work
and were still sort of struggling to find where we really wanted to go
both of us had supportive husbands
like **they** had wives who were supporters,
but it was so much later.
So much **later.**

Co-constructing Nancy's story: A second re-telling

Nancy's telling and re-telling was a thick description of her local stories of growing older and becoming a researcher that also touched on many of the dominant stories that prevailed throughout this study. She told two intertwined and interconnected stories, one of sadness and anger at running out of time, and the other of the excitement that becoming a researcher had brought to her life. Her sadness about getting near to retirement age when 'she hadn't even started yet', seemed a habitual story, a story that she had told before. Nancy confirmed this in the re-telling two weeks later, talking about old stuff and about having told similar stories 'in therapy'. The story of getting 'old', however, had another dimension of entering 'grandmother-hood' and of having 'too many richnesses' in her life. She was conscious of having a rich and varied life outside the world of work. These were identity claims reflected very strongly by her colleagues. Perhaps the combination of being, in the main, women returners from a culture outside the academy gave Nancy, together with Morag, Lynn, Trish, Dora, Donald and Grace, a sense that there was more to writing than 'academic writing' and that there were, for instance, too many richnesses in life, and in being a grandmother, to become too caught up in career goals. Nancy's sadness was not only about the imminence of death, but also about having wasted time 'not living'. This was also an entry point to both an alternative story rich in excitement and value and to a recurring story about gender politics and aging within the counselling field.

There was a developing story that Nancy's long search to make sense of her world, that had taken her so much time in her life, had also provided her with the researcher skills that she had become good at… and that continued to expand possibilities for her. Her anger that she had had to pioneer

this by herself, 'Why the fucking hell couldn't someone have been there to help me' was, literally, bellowed across the room) also fuelled a desire to help other researchers.

Gender and age relations were dominant stories in the conversation. Her anger with the gender divisions in the therapy world, whereby the women engage in practice and the (far fewer and in Nancy's opinion, far inferior), men became the managers, writers and researchers, is echoed, in different ways, by other writers in the field (McLeod, 1997c, Speedy, 1998b, Bird, 2000, ppvii-xxiii)). Accounts of age and gender discrimination experienced by women and older people from other 'helping professions' entering academia (Davies, 1993, Brooks, 1997, Acker, 2001) were brought sharply into focus by Nancy's stories.

Nancy's researcher images also seemed to be engendered , since researchers seemed to be Sherlock Holmes figures, whereas counselling researchers were 'womanly' women, looking in the fluff under the bed. It would have been interesting to ask more about these differences in research image and style and the different contributions they might make. Nancy's sense of herself as an isolated pioneer blazing a trail, contrasts sharply with her sense of excitement and possibility about a community of researchers that she could explore ideas and projects with.

This was a powerful, angry and generous interview that reflected the depth and zest of Nancy's thinking and of our working and personal relationships. My initial attempts to paraphrase were off the mark and not helpful. Staying with 'not knowing' was more useful and I made very little comment throughout the rest of this conversation except to ask some tentative deconstructing questions, based on her stories. Nancy, more than anyone in this group, had a sense of herself as a researcher and a sense of the excitement and possibilities that might lie before the counselling profession and the Bristol group in particular, as it began to research itself and its endeavours. Her determination was reflected in the interview.

Nancy hardly paused for breath as she relished the opportunity to discuss these issues, rail against the injustices of the past and plan enthusiastically for the future. At the end of both sessions, she seemed thoroughly exhausted. To an extent, this echoed the comments she made about 'all that goes with age' and 'physical tiredness', but I suspect that she had been so 'present' in the interviews that she almost had the need to recuperate afterwards.

I was aware of wondering how much competition there might be between us, and of how much Nancy might resent me as a younger woman, having an easier time (although that is not how it

seemed to me!) treading the path that she had already trodden. Nancy's interview was in another dimension in a way, to Alexia's, in that by way of contrast with being so full of one particular story that she was consumed by it, Nancy gave a rich and interwoven account of interlocking stories of gender and age, and of the richnesses and fleetingness of life and of a passion and craving for lifelong learning as well as lifelong living experiences. Nancy seemed thirsty and excited by the possibilities that might unfold around her as well as angry and resentful of the ones that had passed her by.

Morag's story- the core text

I mean I always think there are reasons
why people are at particular places,
mine is to do with
unresolved stuff around my intellect
and to do with having,

oh I felt a sensor then,

having a breakdown when I was at university
and losing a sense of,
losing my mind

and that had very kind of physical,
it had effects on me

like every time I started to walk
into the University

I sort of

I became very clouded,
I stopped being able to read,

So
very powerful,
I had very powerful associations
with the University, and with not being able to function

I also come from a family of intellects
and felt
very inferior, when I was growing up
and felt very stupid
and really only
in perhaps the last 10 - 15 years
have I begun
to feel as if
I have a **brain.**
That I can think logically and I can make sense,
I can understand things
that's the biggest thing for me, understanding.

I'll just go with that one for a moment
there's a whole load of different things,
but I have a very very strong feeling about trying to make things clear

and wanting things to be clear
and accessible to people

and I think
that I see that as coming from my own experience in my family
of feeling like I never did understand things properly
and there was this huge amount of competition for intellectual superiority
at any cost,
and you know the cost for me was all the time feeling
as if I was not good enough,
not clever enough
and feeling kind of humiliated

it wasn't all right to kind of…

like my brother would get very upset if,
if I in any way matched him,
he would throw a wobbler,
and he's older than me
you know
there's a whole load of shit
so there's all that, so I bring all that to it,

I bring a sort of rebellion to it as well,
so I think I'm very,
you know,
I'm quite adolescent in lots of ways

So I have a slight kind of
you know
'stuff you' thing about institutions,
and so part of being in one is
about having some of that **inside** an institution,
so there's a slight….
I want to,
I want people to have an alternative experience.

lots of different levels of how come
I'm in a university
I think there's a personal thing
about

I'm trying to work through
my own stuff about it,
again on lots of different levels.
And I also have
a kind of driving force,

I have a kind of **driving force**
which is about wanting to make things accessible, understandable,
I want people to feel that it's all right to be slightly different,
and that they can be **successful**
and they can find ways of getting round the system,

that would be part of it for me,
and I,
I have a strong feeling of,
slightly kind of,
what the **hell's** the word,

kind of underground
I can't think of the word,
which I'm sure is significant.....

JS Subversion?

Yes, I feel subversive,
I feel as if I'm kind of,

one of the things I see myself doing
is helping people to change,
to change and to see the world differently

and to go out into the world
and to be that **'differently'**
and to spread it

My driving force is much more about,
yes being a bit subversive really and
seeing,
seeing it as an opportunity,
in a selfish way, I suppose,
it sounds a bit kind of weird
but it's what's coming into my head,
is to kind of get people to change in ways
that **I think** they should change.

And to go out and to do more of that,
you know,
and a lot of that is to do with **attitude** change.
A lot of it is to do with attitude change.

So anyway I've gone further into something,
but that's, but the bit about you know
how come you're in a university?

I'm just wondering if there's,
I think there's something about being **inside** a structure,
apart from the subversive bit,

you know that somebody will tell me to do it this way
and actually
I'll do it slightly different,
you know,
I think that's bang on for me at the moment.

but there is some, there's also some sense of
of wanting to kind of shift the structure
I think in the position I'm in,
I can do it in a slightly kind of unseen way,

There's something about being inside a structure
that I think also helps me to feel safe
and gives me a sense of

gives me a sense of what?

Helps me to feel better about myself,
you know,
so I think the kind of affirmation that I didn't get as a child
you know

I mean,
I suppose,
being in a University is,
is part of you know,

bollocks *to you*

I can be in this kind of an environment.
I might not be it in quite the sort of …
JS Kosher way perhaps?

Kosher way yes,
but,

I also feel a bit *compliant,*
you know, I also feel a bit like
I also feel a bit like I'm carrying out ,
an old script
an old kind of well

"you **should** be in a university, you **should** be an intellectual, you **should** be da de da"

the way people
can do that kind of work
is by having qualifications,
so I mean,
that's one version,

I mean you could invite me in
and I'd be very interested in that,
but people won't invite **me** in usually,
because I don't have what I'm supposed to have
in order to be able to do that kind of work,
I mean that's an area of personal difficulty for me.

So yes, you know, it would be *lovely*,
it would be *lovely if*
said to me
if somebody said to me
'you seem like a *really curious* person,
what are you curious about and let's
let's have a look at that
and have a think about that
and how might we do it,
and you know,
that would be a really interesting thing for the University to find out more about,'

<long pause>

but that won't happen as things are
and I don`t try to make them happen

by doing the thing that I'm supposed to do
in order to be able to do it,
so there's a blocking
you know that's something that I'm chipping away at,
but I have mixed feelings about it.

I'm aware of it
which is a good enough,
you know,
and I think about doing things about it
and I may do

And I may not,
you know,
there's a bit of me that's
pissed off about that really.

people who I've worked with do say in conversation,
and quite often I notice,
about you know,
the **MSc**
or doing the **MSc**

or the fact that they've
written books,
or got papers
and so those sorts of things are very….

and obviously **I** notice that
because **I** haven't,
that's a part of it,
so I will be seen I think in a different light
from perhaps many of the 'diploma' people
who have been through the *Bristol University* systems,
because that also always comes up,

that they did the diploma **here** in X year
and you know, it was like this
and de de de,
so people see them ,
and I don't know how many of them there are
as having kind of gone through the system that they've gone through

Re-telling Morag's story one week later.

I also had a feeling of sadness
sadness
sadness

so if I, so I think that's part of something,
you know,
it's that I sort of let myself go into that
I feel very sad.

Remembering,

remembering what that resolved for me
like living in a fog
that really happened
in a big way during that time at university

and I find it quite frightening sometimes when I'm training,
that kind of bit of me, kind of comes over

that's out of focus, or can't think,
the part that is reminiscent of those times,

and it frightens me when it happens.
And it's not that far away you know
And of late,
probably the last,
you know the last few months
I've got a lot kind of clearer headed,
and like I can think
and it's,
sort of sounds like a funny thing to say
unless that part of my kind of history is somehow known,
so something has shifted in the last few months
in terms of my ability to think
and I have felt like a part of my feelings
of ' I'm not good enough' are shown

but that somehow I cannot function in this environment,
I'm not as I should be,
I'm not the right sort of person, I don't fit in
It's about that,
it's about that clouding
it's about that inability to think,

< long pause>

there's a bit of me going off somewhere else
at
the
moment
out of sight
and where I'm going to
is it's still connected with these sort of feelings,
will I ever fit in?
right now at this point in my life,
I'm thinking what I need is some training,

where I sort of floated off to was
that I've never done anything properly,
I've never done anything far enough
and I was blushing to myself as I was listening

I've gone blank.

I've gone.
It was very, very much in my head,
very much a kind of, a bit like dissociation,
I don't know if **you've** ever felt that but,

like going into a trance
is what it's like
but it's happening you know as suddenly
I can do it

and it happened just then,
so I can't remember what I said
that's …
with my memory,
I struggle with my memory a lot.

and because there seems to be a lot of stuff in here
and not just about what I'm thinking about
but a lot of stuff in here about driving forces
from wherever they're from,
and I feel concerned about my ability to
kind of free myself inside out from some of the kind of being driven stuff
so that was kind of going on in my head
like what happened to the outer side
to being….
what happened to those kind of really early things that got stifled,
and yes
I **am** sort of doing them in my own way in my old age,
there's something about that that strikes me.

and just those kinds of questions about
what am I doing in this situation?

is that the best,
is that the best place for me?
I feel a bit kind of dissatisfied with this, with myself

it feels like with myself
in the moment now
or in the process of the last 15 minutes,
and here.

There's something about being sort of stuck in my head
sadness
it **is** sadness
that was sort of part earlier on and I think that's
at some level
I find it very difficult to,
or I have found it very difficult to
integrate with
with how I've been feeling in the last 10 years or so

as a part of me that's kind of OK and familiar
and doesn't take me unawares
or debilitate me in some way
which is what it feels like

Co-constructing Morag's story: A second re-telling

Morag's interview and it's retelling contain immense chunks of monologue. Like Alexia and Sonya, the opportunity to talk about her work at the university allowed Morag to explore the local/personal stories of that work that were uppermost in her own mind and most meaningful to her, although she was later concerned about making sure she talked about research because 'that was what my study was about'. Morag was interested in exploring the connections between how she had developed as a person and how she came to be working at the university. She viewed her discomfort on entering the portals of such a traditional university as a real strength that she brought to her teaching, but like many of the participants she was aware of the costs involved for herself. I have already explored the first part of this core text in some detail in Chapter Eight, which I will not repeat here. This rich mixture of what I heard as poignancy, frustration and sheer bloody-mindedness continued throughout the text.

The 'stuff you/bollocks to you' quality that Morag brought to her relationship with the university echoed similar stories from Lynn, Heather and Donald. This was perhaps a different version of Alexia's not belonging. This seemed a dominant story within counselling cultures, but Morag also had her own experience-near, local story of feeling safe within a structure and of her 'clouded' experiences providing her with a determination to make things clear for her students. An alternative to finding herself blank and cloudy was embraced for a second time in her re-telling when she again found that she had been becoming more clear headed over the last few months. She used the interview to also reflect on her future, on what further training she might do and whether the university was a good situation for her to stay in much longer. Her habitual story of being humiliated within her family, perhaps echoed in her expressions about colleagues who 'fitted' the culture of the university and had acquired master's degrees, also contained points of entry to other stories. There had clearly been times, that had not been well received in her family, when she had matched her older brother in some way. It would have been interesting to find out the ways in which she had matched him and how she identified them. As the youngest female member of the family these moments of matching her older sibling had clearly stayed in her memory. Morag did not specifically talk much about research except to acknowledge that she was a curious person and it would be 'lovely' to have her interests and concerns about her work taken

up by the University. One of the most powerful aspects of this conversation from my own perspective was giving her this transcript in stanza form to read. She returned it saying that she had been struck by the power of what I had said. *'It made me think about doing the M.Sc, or clearing off. I had no idea I had been so cogent. I had thought it all a great burble'*

Alongside Donald, Lynn and Grace, Morag saw herself as a rebel or maverick, someone who to a certain extent relished 'not fitting' the system, but like Alexia she also wondered whether she was in the right place, whether the costs of 'not belonging' were too high for her, even though she was convinced of the benefits for her students. This reminded me of one of the respondents to the national survey, Mary Berry from Manchester, who commented:

'We are all living on borrowed time here, the university is borrowing from our lives something for our students that they will never return to us. They don't know what it is.'

I find Morag's story very moving. I continue to be stunned and impressed that she is working at a university given her own earlier experiences of such institutions. I am convinced that Morag brings enormous emotional and cognitive intelligences to her work, and to the students she works with. She is also the least well-qualified member of staff in the eyes of the university. She has lived a 'life less ordinary' than most traditional university lecturers, but as Mary Berry comments above, the University of Bristol would be hard-pressed to recognise that it was borrowing that experience.

I am also finding myself pondering, at this point in the process, upon the relationship between counselling cultures and the 'cult of the individual' as discussed in Parts One and Two of this study. Cushman (1995) in his study of the construction of North American psychotherapy comments that 'we have trouble imagining the self in any other way than the way we have configured in our era' (p23). Having imagined ourselves, we have perhaps constructed our systems organisations in particularly 'individualised' ways too. This is not a comparative study so I have no means of knowing how other professional would respond in these kinds of conversations. I find myself curious, however about how nurses, teachers, social workers and doctors might respond and whether they would make such strong links between their workplace experiences and their inner qualities and personal life histories. I suspect not.

Heather's Story-the Core Text

Researchers, yes, Researchers,
they're people who, for whom research and publishing their findings
and then publishing some more and then publishing some more is **all.**

And my fantasy is that they, (I *know* this is crap,)
sit in their rooms without contact with other people
in the university, or students or staff or,

they give *symposiums* on research and talk about the research
and disappear up their navel, up your navel yes,
anyway they disappear

so one of my criteria about doing research would be
that it would have to actually..
will I be making a difference?
and I don't think that's about megalomania
in terms of it being known, that other people knowing it,
I don't think that actually bothers me,
it's that I,
I can't imagine wanting to do something if it didn't have,

I'm on my bridge again,
I really believe that
so I want to be bridge, research Heather,
I've gone on to me again,
if I do research I want it to
not be just for it's own sake,
like I don't want training just for it to be for it's own sake
or counselling in a little room to be for it's own sake,
there's actually got to be some comeback on the rest of those people lives
or everybody's lives or
change the world,

I think there are some really,
there are some human beings who are politicians
and there are a lot of people who may have started off as human beings
but turned into this thing called politician
and I think,
I don't know whether it's true,
but *I imagine* researchers started off as
human beings

and I think some of them turned into only researchers
and I have no,
I don't know who these people are
but that's my myth
and I suppose I don't want it to be like that really.

No, but.
I am **Suspicious** of counsellors, of trainers of academics who
who **turn into researchers.**

At best it means being able to take myself seriously enough
and being able to take the word 'research' less seriously,

I need to have,
that's what I need to do,
so actually thinking, yeah you know it is what, you do it,
it's an extension of what you do,
and then doing it,
so taking myself seriously enough

giving myself time to do it I guess,
but that balance of making research less
and me more.

I don't know quite what it is
but something around

so it's something around tools,
it's having the forum but also something about being helped to have tools as,
and some of us,
the other part of me says perhaps you ought to get off your backside and learn it actually,

it's something about avoiding the,
not avoiding the world of research but,
but finding a way that's,
doing something without a label

JS Yes, so we didn't feel that we almost sold out it sounds like… perhaps that's not quite

the…

YES!
SOLD OUT!
or got into something that we might get out of our depth in.
I want research to be special because it changes,
I want it to change things,
and I want it to be ordinary

JS ordinary magic?

Yes, that's what I was just thinking.

research,
I don't know if I mean this or not
I'll find out…

research is only counselling skills,
it's only tools and techniques
to do something else,
so teaching research is about enabling counselling to do something,
to be something,

I want counselling research to come from counseling
and from me if I'm doing the researching,
from my acknowledged value system,
I might well have to put aside
but you know
but from a congruent place
rather than research,
rather than think
' oh god what can I research into?'

IT'S LIKE SORT OF IT'S *COUNSELLING* RESEARCH AS OPPOSED TO COUNSELLING *RESEARCH.*

that's a better image, now we're getting somewhere,
and in my head, I've got one of those snow toys and

And the word 'research' and the word 'counselling' are some of the snowflakes
and they are all sort of twizzling around together,

and I actually realise that's not a very useful analogy
because that then settles and gets back something very static
and I think I want it to be
perhaps not as busy as that sort of frantic twizzling
but an intermingling
everything that's happening
happening,
it's important,
'it' being everything I think,
counselling being important, research being important, training being important
or people being important,
all of those things are happening together,
but there is the lightness of touch so that
I've got visions of sort of the photocopier madly spewing things off because people are actually
quite excited about what they're doing and it's not getting into
it **is** getting into……..
…… to nice bound journals and things,

but it's also spewing off in
the photocopier room and it's a bit untidy

and of course you **are** a researcher, this conversation,
my excitement, this is part of research
but at the minute,
that doesn't help it
it's like sort of,
it's a fear really

if I make **you** a researcher,
somehow there's a gulf between
instead of,
if you were introduced to me as a researcher,
somehow the gulf between comes,

<forward roll>

if you were introduced to me as a counsellor
or a supervisor type of person, trainer whatever,
there isn't that gulf so it's somehow bringing the researcher into another chair around this table,
which is as important,
I'm not, I'm not trying to say that it should not have status,
but it doesn't have an overriding aura somehow
which is part of

What I'm actually thinking,
I don't know how feasible this is,
after that when presumably you don't need the tape any more for our process,
I'm just wondering if it's possible to make a copy of it,
because apart from your research,
I'd quite like to do my own,
I mean a bigger…
… 'IPR'

Re-telling Heather's story two weeks later

COUNSELLING RESEARCH

I remember feeling,
I remember feeling very silly then
but I couldn't decide whether I'd,
there was a conversation going on in my head behind that was,

'have I made the most amazing discovery that's going to be really useful to me,
all that slaying the dragon,
or have I just said a load of crap?'

and then the next thought was
'actually everybody else's penny must have dropped months ago,
couple of years ago!'

<pause>

JS **Are you thinking about that in relation to me?**

Heather Yes, I am

JS **I'm dropping pennies and she's got pounds almost**

Heather
Yes, yes.
I'm surprised at how vehement I was there,
yeah perhaps that was a farthing dropping in
that it suddenly
made a difference between,
it's like I knew the difference
but hadn't actually thought about
the difference of
when something's recorded and not, you know put down, laid down
but I sounded much more vehement there than I think I actually felt.

Interesting .
What I'm struck with now is what a struggle that was.
I mean it was a struggle
and that sort of,
the way I'm talking sort of captured it,
it sort of
I was formulating,

I thought that I had thought about
counselling research before
but I was,
thinking about it in a different way and formulating,
having the temerity to actually say what I thought I wanted it to be
and that felt very different from where I'd been before
I think
and also…

and I remember sort of feeling
a bit eureka-ish
I think,
and I'm just noticing that I was talking about fear

that sort of was one of the bits when I stopped,

no not stopped,
lessened,
sort of some of the fear there.

I'm just thinking of you using these tapes.

I guess I'm finding at the moment it difficult to take my own,
to hold on to taking my own thoughts about research seriously enough,
and so if I get serious,
I'm afraid of sounding too pompous.
Yeah. It's still a sort of "who am I to know" syndrome

It was over that sort of,
well I don't remember it seeming like a pompous moment
but I got quite excited and it became more real
I had visions of people sort of scurrying round all over the place,
which is something that I've thought about since,

I can get quite excited about the idea,
but it's quite hard somehow to go off and do

and for a moment I lost the gap I think,

when we were talking about sort of theory and practice,
my theory,

of me doing some,
doing some research
and the practice of it,
and there's a tendency for it to come back,
the fear, I mean,
I need to do something about that, otherwise it'll just build up again.

and on the one hand recognising myself as able
and on the other hand saying oh, but am I ***able enough*** to do this research?

Co-constructing Heather's story : A second re-telling

Heather's interview was amazingly energetic and wholehearted. At one point, whilst pondering the differences between being introduced to me as a researcher and to me as a counsellor, she tipped into a forward roll off her chair and landed at my feet. Heather was the first interviewee to name and feel a strong sense of a 'research/practice' gap or 'gulf' and to experiment with moving in and out of it within the interview and the re-telling. Heather very clearly identified herself as not a researcher and as being quite resistant to research activities unless, as she discovered, this was in connection with COUNSELLING research, rather than research into counselling.
Heather had published in the counselling field and had some responsibility for teaching and supervising research studies at master's level. She seemed willing to undertake research on her own terms, yet she was amongst the participants who were the most condemning of researchers.

Her ambivalence towards research seemed to reflect some of the dominant stories to emerge from the survey in Chapter Two. She told a very strong story about research and researchers being another, privileged breed who were from a different culture from practitioners and quite possibly, from human beings. She was very aware of research as a high status activity and that researcher's identity claims were privileged over and above those of teachers and practitioners within the academy. This construct of privilege had Heather separating herself quite vehemently from the word researcher. Although she 'knew it was crap' her alienation from the world of university researchers was very strong and although her forward roll towards me made us both laugh, she was clear in her warnings to me about the positions I was taking up in relation to her and very clear that her responses to researchers and practitioners were different. She was not suspicious of me, it seemed, only because she was not choosing to construct me as a researcher in this conversation. I found it a very powerful 'moment of reckoning' between us when she said:

if I make **you** a researcher,
somehow there's a gulf between....
instead of,
if you were introduced to me as a researcher,
somehow the gulf between comes,
<forward roll>

if you were introduced to me as a counsellor
or a supervisor type of person, trainer whatever,
there isn't that gulf

Heather's forward roll across the floor (emphasising her point) was perhaps the most effective 'paralinguistic feature' in the study. She landed within millimetres of me.

This 'gulf' came within a very personal account but also embodied much of the cultural story described earlier in this study. There was also another personal story about whether Heather was 'able enough' and whether she could take herself seriously enough to enter the research arena. It would have been interesting to explore some of the absent but implicit' stories here and ask about the circumstances where Heather was able enough and took herself seriously enough and how she had come by those abilities and beliefs.

Heather's text was quite central to much of my thesis about the constitutive nature of narratives in conversation. In this conversation a strand emerges about research needing to change the world, which is fleshed out in an almost epiphanal moment of excitement about the differences between

counselling *research* and *counselling* research. Heather embraced these ideas and began thickening this description that was central to a re-authoring of her ideas and assumptions about research. In 'somehow bringing the researcher into another chair around this table' as a valued, but not differently privileged member of the counselling community she was able to reposition herself.

Heather's process of finding the interview valuable for herself and using the interview to work out her own meanings and ideas is evident from these stories. She demonstrated the transforming potential of research interviews by asking to borrow the tape herself to explore the moments in which she had become animated about engaging with a community of researchers in messy ways, around the photocopier. It was as if Heather was re-authoring the process of research for herself during the interview and subsequent re-telling.

It seems important to reiterate here that Heather and I are very close colleagues and friends, particularly given that she was so whole hearted in her approach to this interview. She used her time well in these conversations and the impact stayed with her. This was the first of many interconnected conversations that we later had about the forthcoming 'snowstorm'. She was also astute enough to know that she had provided a rich text for me to draw on in this project.

Lynn's story-the core text

I saw my brief as setting up a programme,
modelling the kind of teaching and learning on it
and developing in both those ways.
I didn't see it as being *research*,

It also suited my values
which I suppose was the other thing that I brought,
which was a value about doing, values about *doing* and *being*,
and my commitment was to set up counselling training
so that other people could learn to do/be.

Writing-
it feels appropriate for me to do that now,
or it has felt appropriate for me to do that now,
as if you like the…
… a harvest of my experience and practitioner life as a trainer,
it wouldn't have felt particularly appropriate for me to do that earlier
because I wouldn't have felt confident
or confident enough or,

I find myself wanting
to say

arrogant enough,
to feel that I had enough to say,
but that may be more about me
than about it,

Researcher-I wouldn't use that label,
not in the way the University uses it,
I think,
I think I've always been...
a researcher
in the way I've tried to think about what I do and other people do
and look at ways of helping other people learn it,
you know,
I think that's being a researcher in the sense of reflecting on what we do,
and working out what's significant about it and what's transmissible about it.

JS: How does the university use that label differently? what sort of person is a researcher?

Well it's a person who has a different balance between,
between doing and being and analysing,
perhaps.

I do all those things, but the balance for me is more about *being and doing*
than it is about analysing and writing
whereas a researcher,

I think for me,
is someone whose balance of effort is on analysing and writing
about whatever it is they're looking at in terms of doing and being.
So, all the elements are there-but the balance is very different -
the emphasis is very different,
very different
traditionally anyway.

And I suppose because I see the University as still,
in everything I've learned about the University,
everything I, you know,
I've assimilated
in my getting on for 12 years there
about being a researcher
is more about analysing and writing,

which for me is much more about
the *dead* end of things
than the live end of things
and of course you're trying to do research on other people in the counselling courses
and other people I'm sure
are trying to do research which is more about life
and linking the doing and being

but traditionally
in the University's eyes
it's, the emphasis is still on, on the deader end of it for me,
and I've no desire to do that.

That sounds awful.

I don't see how a researcher can do the analysing and writing without the doing and being bit,
and the way we've moved the research
on that much more to live things and de da de da de da,
it still feels like a struggle against the tide of the real image,
the traditional image,

you know,

it still feels I have to look over my shoulder all the time,
is this *all right*,
is what they're doing all right,
is what we're doing all right,
is what *you're* doing all right?

Well I was just thinking about the book that I've written you know,
the book,
my book,
I didn't write it as a result of a piece of research
which many of our colleagues might have done,
I wrote it as *the fruits* of my 25 years experience.

JS: And would you not call that research really in a way?

We don't think of it like that,
Yes
I notice that going on from that
is that nobody has yet, in our set up
including me,
has yet asked me to do any work with the students based on the book.

We've done some research, we've written about it,
most people as I understand the process would then be doing teaching sessions
based on the fruits of their research
for example,
and *none of us* have asked me to do that.

we don't set up research projects or get research grants
or do small scale studies or all those things,
so we don't model in that sense, we haven't been doing.
So we're not using it in a congruent way,
if we want to model it
as we do everything else,
there's some way in which we treat that differently,
we collectively,
including you and me,
treat that *differently.*

I think your question
is about how could we get a *different* research climate
I think there's been a research climate
but it's been an old fashioned one....

Trainers, counsellors, researchers
they're almost three separate groups.

the 21 years of the, of Counselling, the journal, BAC's journal,

it would be very interesting to analyse that
and my guess is there'd be half a dozen names that crop up again and again and again and again,
Alex Howard,
John McLeod,

you know
whatever,
mostly men actually as well,
interestingly

who have been the writers, the researchers
and relatively few trainer/practitioner writers.

my impression,
from my odd forays out into things
like being on things like the graduate studies committee
and things like that,
is that the people who call themselves researchers
and people like me who call themselves educators
are very,
very different
and have very different priorities.
Very different priorities about students,
very different priorities
about where they spend the bulk of their energy and time,

but I mean
that's anecdotal if you like…

I don't know

if it's worth anything
but it's a very strong impression.

I suppose what I would want to hang onto
and what I would feel enraged if we lost was,
is
the total deal that the students get

If the change of climate and the change of priorities
meant that they got less,
personal attention,

less ,

support and challenge and depth,

less
if they became

less the,
the,

I don't know the word….

the **prime purpose** of the enterprise,
then I think we might have lost something absolutely crucial in,
in what has made us such a successful group to date really.

I don't think they are exclusives at all,
and I don't think having

a better emphasis on research
need be in opposition to what's in that prime purpose
but
if it over,
if it
dominated,
if it took away that prime purpose,
I think that would be a huge loss.

If however....

ideally counselling training would become a four-part process not a three-part process.
We've worked very hard
to make theory, practice and personal development have parity
in counsellor training,

research would be in there as well,
I suppose in this creative,
linking way

It feels like you are,
you are,
you are looking at,
potentially at a significant next step in the development of counselling training,
I think it feels **important**.

I think it feels important,
err I've been very involved in
you know,

with kind of life time counselling training if you like,
pretty well in this country
and I,

it feels like this is another stage which I think you are,
you personally I mean
are well placed to really,
really to **influence**
and that feels important as my own interest in counselling training
is waning in some ways,
until I start to talk about it when I feel very interested,
so I felt really interested
as we talked about it, err
but it feels like another stage, like a new err era if you like,
which,
which could be very exciting as long as it doesn't get buried in,
well

it's what you said in the beginning really...
as long as counselling can change research
to make it *live* enough
rather than research changing what counsellors **do**
to make it fit.

Re-telling Lynn's story-one week later

I think I was struggling to get,
to get it right to be clear
about what you were,

what you wanted and what you needed.
Something,
some anxiety around about getting it right.

Anxious I think to…
to understand what you wanted,
not to mess it up.

Which does reflect the feeling,
in terms of the topic you're researching,
the feeling
that I always had
since I came to the university,
always had
all my life probably,
about very easily getting into an anxiety about what I don't know,
not knowing what I don't know.

The anxiety is about whether I know what I don't know.

in terms of the academic life in the university
or me as an academic teacher
so called
in the department,
you know,

and I, do I *know* enough?
am I **good** enough?
do I know what I'm supposed to know
and certainly with my research the feeling of well there…
are there *arcane secrets*

that actually I don't know because
I've come late to university life
and I'm not,
I don't think of myself as an academic,
…. become labels people use,
and always underneath that sort of anxiety about
what don't I know,
you know,
what have I missed,
what if …
is there more to this than I than I think?

Insecurities around that bit
which have been very, potentially…
disabling…
I don't think they've been actually disabling much
because I haven't wanted to do the writing
or the research
or be ambitious as an academic
but they could have been I think
because they are,

they *are*

disabling.

Co-constructing Lynn's story : A second re-telling

This contribution was pivotal, since Lynn, who had not been herself engaged in research in the traditional sense, had originally set up the counselling programme and had subsequently employed me as her only other full-time colleague. Lynn was the only other member of the group who was positioned, as I was, permanently between the interface of the professional world of counselling and the academy. I knew that she had expressed ambivalence towards traditional research. She had been supportive and encouraging of this project thus far, but I knew I would find it hard to sustain my commitment, and perhaps the commitment of others, if I came away from this conversation convinced that Lynn thought what I was doing was a waste of time. Lynn was a key figure in the personal politics of the organisation.

Lynn's personal and perhaps habitual story positioned research and teaching quite differently both in terms of her own value system (prioritising doing and being) and within the academy. She saw researchers more at the dead end of things and teachers/practitioners more at the live end of things. Teaching privileged students as the 'prime purpose' whereas research perhaps performed the 'balancing act' of prioritising in different ways, ways that Lynn did not value as much.

Lynn had contributed to the literature of the counselling field, but had constructed her own contribution as a distillation of practice rather than as a research process. She seemed uncomfortable with the idea of her own writing being seen as research: 'we don't think of it like that' was an interesting reply. I did not notice the 'we' until much later. She was aware of a privileging of writing (implicitly perceiving writing as a more 'arrogant' practice) over doing and being and that it was 'mostly men actually' writing even in the professional practice journal of counselling. Lynn, by way of contrast, determinedly privileged 'doing' and 'being'.

Although Lynn did not construct herself as a researcher in the 'way the university sees it' she did have a more local story of research in the sense of reflecting on and teaching from her practice. She did not seem initially keen to embrace or extend this 'alternative' story of research or researching, although a different story emerged in the conversation, particularly towards the end,

in which Lynn had offered something of a critique of our current teaching practices. Lynn's realisation that she, and others, had not used the publication of her book (about counselling training) as a focus for teaching led her to consider the possibilities for integrating research more into the professional training of counsellors. An alternative story emerged, perhaps similar to Heather's 'extra seat at the table' wherein research might be added alongside theory, practice and personal development as a key element in professional counsellor training and as an equal, rather than privileged part of that experience. It would have been interesting to explore the ways in which Lynn perceived research differently from theory, for instance, and to speculate on the shifts in these meanings that might occur within such a future curriculum.

A sense of academic privilege, and the 'weight of the academy' emerged as a forceful backdrop to Lynn's stories. It was impossible to ignore her context and the impact that it had had on her. Perhaps as a pioneer, blazing the trail for counselling programmes through the structures and systems of a traditional university, Lynn had more of a sense of the history of power relations between counselling and academic practices than many of her colleagues. The re-telling of the conversation became a very personal, introspective story about getting it right, about getting it right for me, and about getting it right as an 'academic'. Lynn's anxiety about the academy, about the possibility of not knowing the 'arcane secrets' of research, was echoed again and again throughout this study. The 'potentially disabling' anxiety that this text (and interview) ended with was spoken of very quietly. This seemed a very private moment. It was as if the conversation found Lynn entering into a dialogue with her own personal demons, and yet, at the same time, what she had said was also echoed by other participants.

Lynn was anxious to get this conversation right for me and I had a strong sense in ways both said and unsaid that she was trying hard, perhaps for my sake, to distinguish between the kinds of research I was engaged with and 'traditional' research. This careful placing of the word 'traditional' each time with a pause in front of it had me wondering how this conversation would have gone between Lynn and someone she was not so close to personally and professionally. I imagine that it might have been a less intimate interview, but that Lynn's critique of academic cultures might have been even more robust.

Lynn was nervous about where all this would lead and of the losses and dangers to our work and I came away from this conversation very conscious of the 'place in history' that belonged to the pioneers of counselling training.

Chapter Ten: Core texts from Trish, Sonya, Dora, Grace and Andy.

Trish's story-the core text

I've been working as a counsellor, as a trainer,
a counsellor for twenty plus years and a trainer for about nineteen,
eighteen/ nineteen.

So there is something about
a hell of a lot of experience in those fields
and I think what I don't have as much as some is recent book learning or study,
but what I do offer is an ability to always apply
whatever I'm talking about to practice
which I think is,
what I value most about myself
and I think on the whole,

well one of the things that the students *particularly* value about me.

I do find research fascinating
and then I think what I bring to that is a very clear awareness
I've seen people fudge their research practice
and I've seen people discard experimental results because
they didn't fit with their hypothesis.

I have seen people try to make something out of too small a sample
and I've also seen people asking the wrong questions,
you know if you're going to get a good piece of research you need to ask the right questions
because otherwise you get,
you know
it's not **VALID**,
you don't get an appropriate answer,
it's like all those people who send out questionnaires
and the interesting stuff is 'any other comments' because in fact
they've asked all the wrong questions.

I have a brain that works in a research fashion,
I have an ability to be *logical*,
I have an ability to work with figures up to a point.
I'm crap on the computer,
I'm **crap** with statistics,
but it doesn't frighten me.

I have the ability to conceptualise things so,
I would…
I find the concept of research exciting really.
It feels like a bit of me that hasn't been used for a long time
and I'd quite like to get back into…

If I were a full-time employee
then it would be much easier to manage within that sort of constraint
but it is…

its juggling time and other needs,
both from family

but also from all the other agencies that I work for.

I wouldn't wish to be a full time academic at all,
and had I wanted that I would have gone for it at some stage,
I think… I don't…

JS: What would it have been like?

Duller I suppose
is the first word that comes to mind.

I suppose at core I really believe you cannot be a trainer
unless you are still doing it
because it becomes an academic exercise instead of
you know…
an application of knowledge

something about being out of date
and no longer having that sort of spark and the drive to,
so that it's…
that stuff that I feel I would lose if I suddenly became a full time employee.

I went to see my supervisor last week
and we were talking about a new case I've taken on and he said
"you meet some really fascinating clients"
and it's **true**
I don't know

I mean as I say
I've been a counsellor twenty odd years
and yet
the reality is each person I see,
each couple I work with
are *unique* in a way that I find really fascinating,

and you *miss* that,
I'd miss that depth of work if I became a trainer come researcher,

I'd be concerned that I'd lose it,
lose that.
I would feel I haven't got,
I'd feel a bit of a charlatan because I wouldn't have any of
my own sort of reality to apply.
So that's. …

some of my resistance.

The other is about boredom.
I think, that I,
I love the challenge,

The BAC Journal arrives;
I don't know how often it arrives…

and it sits there in its plastic wrapper gathering dust.
There are times when I get as far as taking that plastic wrapper off
and skimming the list of contents
and think

gosh that sounds interesting

but I would guarantee I wouldn't, in the last year's worth
I've probably read one article.

Yeah. And also I have by the side of my bed
a large pile of lying dusty books.

what would trigger me into **actually** reading them would be
if I had a reason to.

I suppose that's part of it
it's like my reading and my research

you know *all that stuff,*
I would read last thing at night when I'm tired to

as a way of unwinding.

To sit during the day and read a book,
I still would have attached to it all those sort of introjects from my father
About…
you're not sitting on your bum wasting your time reading a book
when you could be…
should be…

whatever

Re-telling Trish's story- a second re-telling

The way of keeping the **colour**
would be by taking the research out into the outside world
rather than keeping it within the constraints of
I suppose the pure counselling arena
or within the department

so I suppose it would be actually looking at other,

other agencies,
other areas you know
application to the world in a wider,
wider way
I think, that's how I would see it.

I have a real resistance to the *incestuous* nature
and the introspection

I suppose for me the research would be about
you know
in a real broad way how to,

how to apply the core concepts that we take into our counselling world
to facilitate the well-being of the world,
do something about that.

Because I suppose that is my belief which is that if we,
if we
could mirror outside what,
you know the sort of relationship that we can contain
I actually think that it would have a *knock-on effect*
politically
and in all sorts of ways,
so it would be something like that,
would be not ignoring the political,
not ignoring
I suppose the whole sort of civilised world,
in a way
I think that sometimes we *can* do.

I learn much better through experience
than I do through reading
and particularly at the moment

I'm aware of some of the,
some of the men on the courses
who are railing against the lack of debate,
academic type debate,

and there's a great chunk of me that thinks
you don't need to learn to debate because you can do that,
you're all good at that,
what they are missing out on
is the sort of *tuning into themselves* bit
not that I think that book learning,
academic learning
is irrelevant,
but I think it's secondary to some

to the practice,

that some of the students I've got are *excellent* practitioners
and not good at the academic,
you know they find it really hard work

and yet,
I will talk to them much more than some of these academic men
who understand all the theories
and can sort of pontificate
about the stuff
but not...
but I wouldn't *trust* them
I wouldn't trust them to hear me.

I think it has something about being,
something about being in the real world
as opposed to sort of the ethereal world
of most academic courses,

I mean I suppose part of my contract with my kids
is something about

I'm there when they're there,
so in the evenings,
I'm not up here doing private study or whatever else,
I'm being part of their family
John takes time in the conservatory and sits and reads and listens to music
and I stay with my kids
and watch all sorts of crap on the telly with them
because that's part of it,
you know I suppose if they,
when they're not here I'm,
it would be different because…
then I'm sure I will be doing,
whether it will be sitting reading and then I don't *want* just to read a novel,

I shall want something more than that
but at the moment my life feels **bloody full.**

Co-Constructing Trish's story- a second re-telling

I have a more distant, more workaday relationship with Trish than with the first five people that I interviewed. We have worked together at times but not often, and we have contributed very different personal and professional qualities to the programme. Trish seemed very interested and willing to take part in the project and was part of both the initial conversations and the main study. This interview was more formal than any of the others with less conversational flow. At the beginning of the first taped interview we were more formal and polite than in most of the other conversations, apart from those with Liz and Clare who have already been identified in Part One as students on courses I was tutoring relatively recently.

The stories that resonated with me and that I have consequently emphasised here, were the habitual conversation or story that we shared about 'preciousness' in counselling cultures, the habitual local stories privileging practice over research, experiential over academic learning and critiquing the 'engendered' nature of learning and academia, and a unique, personal story of an ease and comfort with traditional research practices. Trish, like Paul and James and Dora, was acutely aware of being out of date with the current literature and research in the counselling field, but she was uniquely unapologetic about this feature of her professional working practices. Like most of the group it was her identity claims as a practitioner and the diversity of them that Trish considered most valuable to the University.

Trish and Dora had worked at the University longer than anybody else, but this had always been on a part-time basis and there was little sense that Trish had become inculcated with the

University's values. She clearly valued therapeutic practice over and above research in terms of the contribution she felt she needed to keep her teaching 'alive'. She shared with many of her colleagues, James, Paul and Donald in particular, the notion that an active research role, in addition to the commitments that she already had as practitioner, supervisor and teacher, was only really possible for members of staff with fulltime contracts and unlike some other people in the group like Paul and Liz, this was clearly not a future role she aspired to. Trish's dominant values came over very strongly in this exchange; life at the University fulltime would be 'duller' than her current 'bloody full' life. Research, although useful, would not be nearly as useful to her, or to her students, as her therapeutic practice.

Trish's voice differed from those of her colleagues in two major respects: firstly her 'research story' did not include any kind of awe or fear of 'proper' university research. Her own training in the natural sciences and previous role as research technician had given her a familiarity with the key tenets of traditional positivist research. She had an ease and critical awareness of experimental research design and validity that many of her 'arts based' colleagues in the counselling programme lacked. Ironically, for the member of staff who had perhaps the greatest familiarity with 'proper' research practices, she had little or no interest in reading the literature of research or scholarship in counselling and in her working life, even the practitioner-based 'counselling' magazine, remained unread.

That Trish privileged experience and practice and found the idea of research as dull as she clearly did may have had some connection with her previous research experience in the predominantly male world of a science lab. I found myself speculating about her critique of the academically eloquent men on her courses who were interested in debate and were not 'tuning into themselves'. I also wondered what her position would be on research that was trying to use the skills of the researcher in 'tuning into herself and others'. These would have been interesting questions to ask.

Perhaps the most poignant aspect of these conversations with Trish was her last words:

'At the moment my life feels bloody full'

It did indeed. My own experience of Trish was that she was always very rushed. She had a range of demanding work settings: not only the university, but also a group of fairly chaotic and professionally draining local and national agencies. Trish had strong commitments to working in

voluntary agencies and 'frontline' work settings such as primary and mental health care, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, HIV/AIDs agencies, services for couples and families, prison services, the emergency and police services, the armed forces and hospices.

Like Paul, at the end of a busy day, she would rather sit with her kids and 'watch crap on the telly' in the evening, than read a book about counselling. As I engage in this re-telling I realise that I concur with Trish that her invaluable contribution to the programme is her wealth of ongoing experience as a supervised practitioner. I also felt concerned about the privileging of 'unexamined' therapeutic practices. Could there be room for both? How might that be workable? I was reminded of the professor of counselling who had responded to my survey by saying that he did not think it would be healthy to keep up his schedule for long.

Trish did not comment a great deal on our relationship or how it affected this research project, but I was acutely aware of her critique of research that was incestuous and introspective. I wondered whether her criticisms of research 'in the realms of the counselling arena or the department' were levelled at this project. I suspected so, and could certainly see how what I construed as 'intimate' could be easily seen from a different position as incestuous. There was an emerging 'alternative story' here that remained undeveloped in the conversations we had. Nonetheless, Trish, like Heather, was beginning to entertain the possibility of engaging in research that might 'change the world'. This no longer sounded so much 'duller' than the rest of her working life.

Sonya's story-The core text.

I don't feel I belong to the university,
I feel I belong to,
not belong to…
am part of…
small groups within that
which is about just a very few individuals
and I really feel
as if I've got hardly anything to do with the university,
and that's partly to do with being not *even part time*
because it's…
you know
I'm still self-employed,

but it's about you know
there's nothing that ties me into that institution
in terms of pay
and pensions
and union activities
and the kind of things that I associate with

system…
yes I feel that I'm on the
very edge of that system.

JS So where outside your teaching room are your connections when working with us?

Barbara and a bit the others in the office
but Barbara is my main link
and then it mostly seems like
bumping into people in corridors
and now of course it's meeting in Trish's room
on the Friday team thing.
That's very very near the beginning
I'm only three weeks into that
so it feels extremely new
and so I don't know where I feel,
where I fit
at the moment at all really,

whereas I've been doing the other bit
with basic counselling,
further counselling and the negotiation skills
which is linked
for a couple of years now
so it's
feel more
more part of that
but still on the edge and that's…
I come in, do it and leave. yep.

JS. So being involved in a core team there is really new?

It's new and that's exciting.
And I don't know how it's going to be..
and I don't know how
kind of cohesive it's going to feel,
I've been very used in other settings to…

to developing, being part of
not just the training bit
but the development of the training in relation
to the service that it provides,

so I've been instrumental in making a number of changes to things in the past
as a result of my experiences
of training and working with clients
and it doesn't feel
as if I've got any part to play,
at the moment,
in the counselling bit
in Bristol Uni.

this knitting
or perhaps not,

woven rather than knitting into the pattern
And I expect
there's a bit,
there's a bit that's still there,
when you're talking about that about how people work,
not just in with the groups of students but with each other,

and I suppose part of my experience is,

recently is

actually not having my experience
of what has just happened to me
acknowledged,

like that course was cancelled,

that certificate course
that Saturday course,
and I had a letter from Jean
to say it was cancelled
and …

they weren't quite sure why they didn't have people applying for it

and that was all I received
in a way of acknowledgment that
30 Saturdays

of my next year
had completely changed in their nature…

by one letter.

and it, that felt,

<pause>

I felt quite *uncared* for,
about that being noticed
and I sometimes think there's a little bit of that
it's very casual

This part I feel,
and it's you know
if the course doesn't run…
but actually
I had to kind of change my *whole view*
of my next year to accommodate that.

So that,
that's a bit of a,
that's a bit of a kind of..

and I was thinking
you know
who should I have,
who should I have

had a little bit of kind of personal acknowledgment from?

and it would have been **Jane**
and **Jane** wasn't there

and then
it should have been from Jenny
and I hardly know Jenny

and the moment has passed.

Because of that,
about the ethos

and it doesn't always
and sometimes it's…

and in some ways I really like that,
because you know you go in and do that
and then you go off
and do something else and that's fine.
I also do like the notion of regular commitment over a period
because it's something about development
rather than just touching things.
It's like parallels
between brief counselling and longer,
long term counselling.

JS And yet brief counselling should still have those same values and that ethos should still be there.

Yes. The values yeah.

JS Mm, mm. Well I'm sorry that happened, I can't help feeling quite…

anyway, it wasn't up to me…Is there anything I can do now

no I know it's just something that clearly,
obviously it was going to come out while we were talking about this
because you know we're talking about **congruence**
and about people feeling valued
and all of it,
an that was just a recent experience of not being,
and I cried when I got the letter,

I was **so** disappointed,

and then I was delighted
t o be taken on for the diploma thing
and it might be for the best

but it's
you know.

I mean I tend to look at it like that,
you know,
it's actually probably better
if I'm doing a Friday

than Friday and Saturday,
but it's not the point no.

And I don't know,
I don't know whether that's a university thing,
other than a counselling thing
in the set up
because I know from other people's experiences
in the university
that a lot of people don't feel cared for by their,
by their institution
by the institution
and the faculty.

You wouldn't be surprised

J: I would neither be surprised nor know what to do with your expectation that it would be different except that…

you have every right to expect it to be different in a counselling unit.

Yeah, I mean that's…that's the bit

JS: So you were right to have expected to be cared for etc, etc and yeah, mm.

And it's like the same constraints you know
the same lack of time,
lack of resources,
lack of back up
when people are not there
lack of you know,

it's like those systems are not in place always,
er, and that feels worse in ***the counselling*** setting
than in other institutions
as you have learned
to expect that's the way they care.

Re-telling Sonya's story two weeks later

I mean all of that was
a really important sort of thing for me to say to you
and I knew that I was going to be saying it to you *at some stage*

and I didn't much get in touch
with the feelings that I'd had at the time of

at the time that it happened…

of frustration and hurt,
a lot,
it really **hurt** and I *did* cry

but it was very important for me
that you heard that

JS: ***Yes, yes***

And it could have distanced me.
If other positive things hadn't happened
fairly soon afterwards,
it could have distanced me very much from Bristol
and wanting anything to do with it
But I'm, I'm

JS: ***How are you feeling listening to it now.***

Well I'm quite impressed with the way
I'm saying it,
I think I'm thinking,
yeah I'm being,
I'm **very** clear about
about what that experience was like
and remembering it in words.
And that's
that links with something that you were saying earlier
about the counselling at,
this morning about the counselling at work course
and saying well they're only wanting
to do this next year so
and thinking…

that I really want the diploma thing to keep on,
I want to do that and it might be…
that I could just be **abandoned** after this course,
which is quite likely as well
because there might not be enough students
like
you're in there
and then you're out
and then you're in and then you're out,

I'd like to feel connected

and make it into a real important part of my life

And then it doesn't happen.
And that affects me.
And it's you know any time it's mentioned
it just touches something as well

I said there that I was disappointed,
but I was, I was *hurt,*
abandoned…

JS: ***Carelessly?***

Sonya Yes.
So it wasn't just about
disappointment
about the not doing it,
it was
That they're not knitted, they're not knitted

Co-Constructing Sonya's story: a second re-telling

Sonya discussed what I might have construed as the primary purposes of this study at points during our conversation. As with, Alexia and Morag, however, the core text in the conversation was about particular, more personally relevant issues. In her case they were particular issues about her treatment in the workplace that she wanted to address with me. Mischler (1986, pp52-65) points out that these sorts of stories may well have been dismissed as 'irrelevant data' within a more traditional qualitative study. In fact, the issues that Sonya raised contribute to what is becoming a thicker and thicker description of the experiences of part-time staff within the university. The issues she raises about contracts emerged in Alexia's story and are brought up again by James, Paul and Donald. These are key issues for the organization and key issues in the future development of any additional research activities.

It emerged in the re-telling of this conversation two weeks later that Sonya had intended to tell this story of being 'uncared for' by the university. It was as if this was the 'problem saturated' story that she had wanted to tell me before she was prepared to move onto anything else. She did start other stories such as the story of her newness and tentativeness in the diploma team, and even juxtaposed an alternative story of her past experience elsewhere in 'making a number of changes to things'. But it seemed as if she picked up and quickly put down all these avenues until she came to a point of entry towards the story she wanted to tell. She then became visibly and audibly more engaged with the conversation.

Sonya's story of being abandoned by the organization also raises issues of the active and ethical roles of researchers who are conducting investigations within their own setting. It seemed important to record and publish here how hurt Sonya had felt and how differently she would have felt had she been able to have had some personal contact at the time. I also felt the need to take this conversation back to the management group of the day, to look more closely at the ways we informed part-time tutors about course cancellations. Sonya might have expected to have the very conversation she was having with me now when her course had been cancelled. At the time I was, ironically, taking study leave to conduct these interviews.

As she was telling her story of these events I was aware of several attempts she made to situate the stories within their context: to see some advantages in the 'going in and then you go off' contract

that she had with the university and to speculate about how much of her experience had to do with the university, rather than the climate of the counselling programme. This latter perspective is certainly reflected in the literature of contract researching within the university sector (see Acker, 1994, Brooks, 1997). Sonya kept returning, however, to her sense of feeling abandoned. This had me speculating about how the story might have emerged if a different researcher, not somebody 'from' the organization, had taken part in this conversation. It may have been that the issues never arose, as Sonya later speculated. It may have been that Sonya would have been able to be more forthright in her expressions. I bring this up not as an argument in favour, or against 'home grown' researchers, but rather, in order to rehearse, once again, some of the differences in these positions.

In the re-telling of the conversation some two weeks later, triggered by a tape recording of this core text, Sonya thickened, rather than toned down, the story from the first telling. In listening to herself she was able to express how impressed she was with the clarity she had exhibited in telling this story. She did not re-engage with the speculations she had previously made about the advantages of an 'out and off' working relationship with the university, but rather strengthened the story of her sense of wanting to be connected and to make her work at the university an important part of her life. It seemed that she had taken the time she needed to express her concerns about what had happened, but now she was rehearsing her sense of engagement and commitment to the work that she had chosen. She also took the opportunity to expand her original story and clarify that she had not just felt disappointment, but abandonment, and that her experience as a colleague and the stated purposes of the counselling programmed were not ' knitted' or congruent with each other.

As I listened to this conversation over and over again, I had the sense that Sonya had been able to say exactly what she wanted to about these issues. She had not said everything that she wanted to the first time around, but had left the door open for further reflections. She had spoken very confidently, clearly and powerfully on both occasions. This caused me to reflect on some of the 'taken for granted' assumptions around ethical issues in research practices. The past history of my relationship with Sonya was that she had been a student in one of my groups for two years, before coming to work as a part-time tutor at the university and that she currently worked for some of the time in the parts of the programme that I managed. Taken for granted assumptions about power

relationships in the workplace might suggest that Sonya was not a suitable candidate for inclusion in this study and yet she came across as a powerful, challenging and determined participant and as one of the few people who did not express any interest whatsoever in 'getting it right for me'. She had, as an adult student, positioned herself in a particular place in relation to me and had now re-positioned herself elsewhere. All of which was refreshing, and something of a relief.

Dora's Story-The core text

I mean I don't see **myself** doing research
but I don't see why
other people shouldn't

I see the traditional researcher as one removed from the practical.
So standing back and having the advantages of a third eye
if you like, or a third position,
There are, I don't know what the word would be,
some tensions between that and the
and the practitioner,

I know when I'm reading,
if I'm reading some recent research,
I start to realise I've read that paragraph twice
and not taken it in
when it gets into the stock sort of abstract stuff,
the extrapolation from the practical,
I lose touch with it.

So I suppose a researcher for me is someone who is turned on by the idea
and the idea of extrapolating ideas
whether they're or not they are related to the practice.

I think that's the traditional sort of researcher,
I think now with a sort of new paradigm sort of thing
you know
what Peter Reason does,
I mean I think researchers are very different now
because *you're* really saying it's me,
the person of the researcher,
I mean the relationship is important in that sort of research,
as it is in the counseling
so I suppose I would be much more interested in that

Immediately I think about the sort of new paradigms
and the personal being involved
and the subjective is as valued
and as valuable as the objective
that feels *lighter* to me and immediately more full of energy.

I mean that to me is the value of it actually
of those dissertations,
I always try and steer people in the direction of
'how is this going to add to the literature of your particular interest?'
I think that's the value of doing it really
whether it can be used in some way,

not stuck on the **shelf**,
which is my fantasy about what happens to them,

maybe the best scenario is
that we continue with the whole range of courses
and that we have based on that
people who are doing, if you like, 'suit' research, pure research
and there's another research group
which is doing research arising from practical work
and that those two groups have an ongoing debate,

whatever you want to call it,

and research comes out of that,
so you've got two perspectives really.
But I certainly don't think people
should be involved in research who are not interested
just because it's the next thing on the **career ladder,**
i.e.: it shuts down unless you have written the requisite number of papers
or whatever,
but certainly there should be dialogue

does it make a difference that
that I feel I know you to some extent?

W e e e e e e ll ll l (amused grimace as Dora looks me up and down from an upside down position on the sofa)

I think it, in some ways, it makes it more real and it makes it more…difficult
because if you were a market researcher
I might be tempted to make it certain,
just because it's easier somehow
than trying to tease it out,
to make some blanket sort of
statements
maybe not to consider as much as I am considering because

what am I saying?

something about it being a live topic,
it's as real,
it's as real for you as it is for me,
somehow we're engaged in a live dialogue
in which I want to be as clear as possible.
With a market researcher I might be thinking,
well it's something like that…..

what I'm aware of is
sort of struggling with something,
struggling with something
that I've not thought much about at all,
and that's part of the attraction really,
part of the fascination
but also I'm thinking,
I think there's more than this…
and I'm not in touch with it

next week will be very useful,
because it will allow time to pass
and things to arise,
I mean maybe the things that I am editing,
unconsciously editing,
will arise so that will be quite interesting

I didn't have much of an expectation
but I did think…
oh I hope to goodness
you don't want lots of dates about things,
about my personal history

because
I just find I cannot remember

I suppose I had been expecting
more *factual,*
I think it's been
more *thought provoking* than I had anticipated,
and more open,
the whole process feels more open

I would expect that from you because
I think of you
as a
creative sort of person
and I wouldn't have expected you to do a traditional sort of interview,
but I suppose…
I have been vaguely…

thinking about you know the word *interview*
and all those sort of assumptions around that.

Re-telling Dora's story –one week later

I was just thinking
I think this now,
was that it would be easier to come
out with some generalised,
unsupported statement to somebody who wasn't in the trade,
whereas somebody who's in the trade
and who I know to be

critical,
I mean in a good sense,
evaluative and aware of these things ,
it's harder work.

I also think it was easier because I,
I knew what to expect,
I mean I knew roughly what to expect because I knew you,
and I had this sense that it would be **fun** some way
because

I think that's important to you,

and that would be around
and it's also important *to me* as well,
so it was both more difficult
and easier I suppose

I want to ask you a question now,
but that's not appropriate
is it at the moment?

JS: It is if you feel we've finished that,
I mean do you want to?

I just wondered if you,
because you were saying that what you had learned
from doing the pilot study
was so much better to do it this way,
I'm wondering…

in what way it was *better* for you this time,
I mean do you feel you've got
more the truth or what,
or was it
a more interesting process or experience?

JS: I don't know about more at the truth, but it was a different sort of truth or trustworthiness probably. I had a sort of schedule…that I've kind of have ditched since, in favour of
talking to somebody about our shared enterprise.

Dora Yes, it's lifting the expectation
and I'm interested to know how you're going to use it,
I mean
how you're evaluating what you're getting,
doesn't,
it isn't immediately *apparent*,

I mean you probably don't want to say that now but it sounds…

JS:Well, one thing I'm getting is questions like that, and it's interesting nearly everybody has stopped this and started asking me questions and sort of, like what are you up to? which I think is an important part of it…

Dora So it's raising up the underlying process, yes, and…..?

JS: I don't know how I'm going to evaluate this,
but it's just very rich material that I'm getting
and the thing that's coming up is
what it seems to be to do with is
how to get us all to notice
what a lot of research we're doing,
and how if we just called it research,
sharpened our focus and were more positive,
were more robust about it,
that's what this is about, it's not about something other.

Dora So it's about being clearer about what we're actually doing rather than bolting on something or doing it different

now let's call it *research*

and write it and publish it
and let the students know
or whatever
and everybody actually has a researcher's *questioning mind*

it's about being a bit more robust about,
yes
it's being clear about that,
and with the students you know

'oh that's a *research* question that you're asking,
you could if you wanted investigate that,
you could just ignore it'

absolutely,
yes it's about being clearer about what is,
and validating it by that,
and seeing where we are can lead to
rather than feeding in something extraneous
and saying right get on with that,
it's starting from where we are.
Let's see where we are and see where that leads to.

JS: Yes, absolutely.
But it's only by following people that I've made

Dora Come to that, yes.
So that,
that's really interesting isn't it

Because
it's not coming in with an idea,
or if you did come in with some idea of,
you've been open to everybody's process
and your own…

and the together process
to see where we actually are and to see what's there,
so it's real
real research really, not coming

rather than coming with an idea
that you need evidence to support,
exactly, yeah.

It's *exciting.*
It's good.

Co-constructing Dora's story-A second re-telling

Dora is the programme's oldest and longest standing member of staff. She has been involved in counselling and psychotherapy since its infancy in Britain. We had not formally worked together much, but we had had quite a lot of fun together in the staff group, and enjoyed each other's company. Dora did not work at the university very much

now, but she had contributed considerably to the programme in the past. This was a very proactive interview, the core text was very much about the process of being interviewed, and the re-telling witnessed Dora asking pertinent questions about the research design and process that I responded to.

Dora had initially spent some time unenthusiastically exploring what seemed like a habitual story about her own lack of interest in conducting research. She distinguished clearly between herself and 'researchers' who enjoyed extrapolating ideas whether or not they had any practical application. She returned to these distinctions later in contrasting pure and practical research groups and was very scathing about the culture of the academy and about research for the sake of 'the required number of papers', (implying there was other more purposeful research, although we did not explore these ideas further). Dora also began to develop an alternative story about 'new paradigm' research, which she saw as 'lighter'.

Dora then began to ask herself some very interesting questions about what difference it made that she knew me, and what would the conversation have been like if I had been a market researcher. I might very well have asked Dora the first of these, although I would almost certainly not have thought of the second. Dora had an interesting 'take' on assumptions about whether it would have been easier or harder to be interviewed by a market researcher, which she also came back to two weeks later. Her personal take was that it would be both easier because she knew me and that it was a 'live' issue for us both that we were discussing, but also harder, because she had a sense of trying harder and of struggling more, not taking the easy way out, of making things 'certain'. This is very interesting feedback on the ethical issues that concerned me about conducting an intimate research project. It had not occurred to me that people would feel they had to work harder. It is also an interesting perspective to be taken into account for those designing research questionnaires to be administered by 'unknown' researchers.

Dora was enjoying her role as self-interviewing woman, which seemed to have her performing in lighter ways and with more energy and to shift her cultural assumptions about the interview. She was not surprised that it had been fun, but she was slightly surprised, it seemed, that it had been so thought-provoking.

Dora continued her re-authoring of the word 'interview', which she interrogated for herself towards the end of the conversation and returned to again two weeks later. On this occasion Dora

interviewed me. I had become accustomed to starting the initial conversations with quite lengthy question and answer sessions about what I had found out so far and how the project was going, but Dora had caught on very quickly to the ways she had been interviewed two weeks earlier. She proceeded to interview me right back and, positioning herself in a curious unknowing place. She made good use of a series of rapidly fired, deconstructing questions that were quite unlike her habitual counselling style, such as:

- In what ways was it better for you this time?
- Do you feel you've got more [to] the truth?
- Was it a more interesting process or experience?

Dora seemed to very much enjoy her role as 'narrative interviewer' and, indeed, asked questions that gave me food for thought. In this re-telling and questioning she also seemed to be re-authoring some of her dominant assumptions about research and was embracing a number of alternative ideas about the development of open, exciting and participative research processes, without losing any of her clarity about not wanting to conduct research herself. In the course of these conversations Dora had positioned herself differently in relationship to research, although not to the academy, and was now actively thickening both her own, and my own descriptions of researchers that were not neutral figures, but rather, that wanted to engage in a process that made people curious, excited and questioning about their work. She also had me curious, questioning and excited about the impact of my own endeavours.

Grace's story-the Core text

I suppose the idea of research
has a very kind of
formal twang
to me
if you like that,
as if it's
about getting it all down on paper.

<pause >

Yet there are,
there are phenomena,

<pause>

both in counselling and in
working with people
that endlessly fascinate me

and the trouble is that they feel

kind of
unresearchable,

but I don't know if they are.

<pause>

There's the odd phenomena of
how do our clients find us?
how do they choose us?
how come I get a run of a particular type of problem situation
and almost,
almost people

not quite
but during the last year
I've had **two** of my clients
have had babies

and a number more have really been working on this,
they're sort of young women
in their early thirties say,
on issues about whether having children is for them,
at a very deep level,
now what?

and now I'm a granny,
now why has all that come my way this year?

I haven't been noticing it
all the time for ages
you know
I don't know there are times
when I've had a number of alcoholics,
I've also had a bit of a run of people with eating problems,
and sometimes it seems like….

<pause>

the very thing that's going on for me is
what Him up there keeps sending me, you know,
and I don't know
whether that's something you can research
but it's a *weird phenomena.*

How do my clients choose me
and how do I choose my clients and how come…

sometimes when someone rings up I say,
(I know I'm pretty full)
and I say I am full

and sometimes
I **am** full
and someone rings up
and I find a space,

I don't know whether that counts..
because it doesn't sound very scientific at all that,

and I suppose I think
that **research** is supposed to be **scientific**
and maybe that's not true
I don't know.

JS:I hope not, otherwise I'm buggered.
<pause while both parties collapse with laughter>

But anyway ….
If you don't see yourself as a researcher, although you seem to have plenty to research….

how do you see researchers, what are they like?

oh very serious, *(more laughter)*

Well they'd be very bright, very intellectual,
very
yes I suppose my image is
' in the head,'
they'd be very much ideas people,
who, who have an idea and are fascinated by it
and follow it like a dog after a rat
you know
and have got to get hold of it and shake it,
and shake it and shake it
and really see if it,
see what happens.
And they might shake it so hard that the bottom fizzles out
<pause>

That sounds completely nutty.
Well I think also,
yes, yes
I think this is important,

I think researchers see a wider view,
a wider plan

they are looking at a spread of,
so
having said they might be very *very*
focused in on one idea,
they'll also be looking at,
at trying to get a much wider view
and wider spread
of whether this is just a little like a mini phenomena
or
something that just happens in one place
at one time by chance
or whether this is,
is something general
about this with us and whether,

which other people
in other situations can learn from it,
so they'll be trying to kind of…
produce useful information

....which will actually be helpful and useful to other practitioners,
to other people who are
like on the ground,

and I suppose I see myself very much as on the ground.

JS: So from that position, very much on the ground
if I said to you that in the future,
in the work that we do in the counselling unit,
we need to add a research climate into the climate that we've got
not necessarily to take anything out,
but we need to add a research climate, how that would be?
what would you actually see happening?

I see some kind of **co-created**,
I'm actually thinking
in terms of drawing,
painting,

I'm almost imagining a number of people
combined to make a picture, to paint a picture,
to
there being some kind of a central structure,
like a house or a tree,
and within that
people kind of having rooms or
developing areas of interest
or you know painting
yeah painting

areas of interest
kind of developing
out of a thing
that needs to be a very
pretty safe
basic structure
as I say like a house or a tree
but all sorts of things can grow
So vague that isn't it?

<pause>

JS: Well it's actually a very clear image in my mind,
I don't know if it was in yours,
but you've produced a very clear picture in my mind so...

When I say it was vague,
I think
it doesn't say what the different
you know ***bits***
would contain but
but that would be

because the thing about something co-created
is the whole is bigger than the parts,
so just as you need this kind of basic,

safe structure in which to start creating,
co-creating if you like,
so you don't actually know,
you know
what the different people's interests all,
and bits of picture all
add into this
are going to form as a whole

Re-telling Grace's story two weeks later

(first part of the conversation centring around and being interrupted by the cat wanting attention)

I wonder what the importance is of interruptions,
so called
like that,
and er you know
it's like the **ordinariness** coming in isn't it,
which it frequently does in sessions with clients as well,

I used to think it was terribly not on to sort of talk a bit
about the weather when people first arrive,
and how they were going to travel when they go
and now I think oh,
that's part of the setting the scene for us a little bit,
making,
making it comfortable

Actually that all sounds quite sensible to me now
because I think,
that's what research is about too

I think research is about
having an idea
and being so fascinated by it you stick to it like glue,
and follow it up.

last time I was just kind of
exploring a thought,
an idea and not knowing quite
what was going to come out of my mouth,
so it can sound
I must have been feeling
quite relaxed and sort of easy with what was going on
because
I just kind of let my thoughts come
and can't have felt
very threatened by the whole thing.

Co-constructing Grace's story- a second re-telling

Grace was also an older woman and a grandmother. She was an agency-trained counsellor who

was very conscientious about updating this training. She had not been working at the university

very long and worked there less than one day a week, but she seemed to step into her work there quite confidently, supported by her extensive experience as a practitioner and as a trainer elsewhere. I enjoyed this conversation with Grace hugely, there was a great deal of laughter, and there were many asides, chats with the cat, etc…perhaps because we were new to each other and needed more 'social oil' to break the ice.

After a conversation about the nature of this study and the conversations so far, Grace moved straight into what seemed like a habitual conversation about researchers being an 'other' kind of practice. Although Grace was doing a lot of talking and seemed genuinely interested in the content of all the research (or unresearchable) possibilities she was considering, she also seemed to be working at the conversation. There were lots of awkward pauses. It was not until the exchange:

'because it doesn't sound very scientific at all that,
and I suppose I think
that ***research*** *is supposed to be* ***scientific***
and maybe that's not true
I don't know.

JS: I hope not, otherwise I'm buggered.'

that we relaxed with each other and the rest of the conversation seemed to flow differently. Grace's local story of research, an experience-near account of a dog shaking a rat, had her wondering (rhetorically) if she sounded nutty. It also provided an entry into an alternative version of research that she seemed to prefer: an account of researchers having a wider view and therefore being able to find out things that might be useful to people (like her) on the ground. What was interesting about Grace's account was that (by way of contrast with Heather for instance) she did not seem hostile towards, or suspicious of research or researchers. She seemed quite appreciative of the researchers in her 'preferred' account, despite claiming a very different identity for herself and was able to imagine the co-creation of a research climate as a fairly fluid addition to the working environment she already experienced at the university. I was beginning to form a story of my own about this and to wonder whether it was easier to embrace these ideas if you spent less time within the 'academy'. People who spent more of their working life at the University such as Heather, Lynn, and myself were perhaps more inculcated with the assumptions and rivalries of research and teaching cultures amongst the various 'academic tribes and territories' of university life.

The retelling two weeks later was fairly short (30 minutes) because of Grace's other commitments and seemed to be relaxed. There was much discussion of interruptions from my cat, which Grace commented on. Her comments that she now saw this 'ordinariness' coming in as a positive aspect of this interview and of her counselling sessions reminded me of Oakley's (1981) comments about research interviewing and discussion about research interviewers forming 'ordinary' relationships with participants. The retelling ended with Grace commenting on how relaxed she had been towards the end of our conversation, just letting her thoughts come and that she 'couldn't have felt very threatened'. The surprise in her voice at this moment, suggested an unspoken assumption that she might have expected to feel differently. To feel relaxed was welcome, but a surprise.

The conversation with Grace felt lighter than many of the others, less intimate and less serious. I can speculate that this may have been because we hardly knew each other, or because the issues were of no great concern to her (Dora, for instance,'struggled' harder with the issues because she knew me). These would have been good questions to ask, but I did not fully notice this difference in tone until much later.

Co-constructing Andy's Story-the core text

I guess the first thing that just struck me there was that it's
for me,
Its a bit of a shame,
I suppose I can understand the reasons for it,
it's a bit of a shame that
the research element has been taken out of the Diploma . .

So that now it becomes something different,
not part of what a counsellor does.
but I don't think we need necessarily
to have to do a dissertation just to do some research . . .

but now that's become separated,
I'm not sure that that's going to be particularly advantageous,
because it's going to make smaller numbers of people do research.
So I don't know,
I guess

I would consider putting some research back into it
,so that everybody who calls themselves…
a counsellor
has at least got some idea,…
say encourage a climate of finding out for yourself,
I mean I suppose we do that all the time,
in that people have a go,
let's do some pair work for ten minutes
and just have a go at this and see what it's like,
and then feed back,

and *that's researching in a way . . .*

I don't make it **explicit,**
I don't say that's a piece of research
I think in the presentations we probably do,
we say,
go away and research this topic,
and that's probably the nearest that we get to going off and doing some research,
and maybe if we phrase it differently,
write an essay,
then yes,
you have to research this topic,

but I suppose there's something for me,
a difference between investigating something,
or looking something up…

that already exists,

as opposed to creating something **new.**

I mean I know when somebody writes an essay
they create a new piece of work,
but they haven't,
usually,

gone and developed something new…

very rare that somebody writes an essay that's a new theory
new figures or statistics,
or whatever, but it is research,
it's like a book review . . .
I mean the terminology that we use,
that I use, could change a bit….
for me there's no sense of…
oh,

what are you working on at the moment?
or are you doing a course,
or are you creating something new,
I don't get that sense . . .
and that if we wanted to *create* a research environment
we may have to do that,
but some people may not be creating something new
and not researching anything

But maybe not formally recognised…
that you have to . . .
I mean I could have gone and done some research
without applying to do the M.Sc.

I need that structure, though, at the moment,
whether it's being lazy,
or just preferring to watch East Enders
or something,

I don't know,
but I just need that structure,

But maybe the informal research we don't recognise, I don't know.

JS : Is there a difference between research or formal research and 'research-mindedness?

Yeah
yeah and you know,
and that
there is a big tie between research and occupations
and as you say,
getting on,
you have to produce so many papers a year…

I suppose in counselling,
I don't know,
What's the difference between pure research and applied research?
What's worth researching?
I don't know.

Certainly it seems, you know,
you've got a couple of pages in BAC magazine now,
and you have the research conferences
and it seems to be catching on.

I mean I've only been to *one* of those conferences,
but the one that I went to,
the people who were presenting papers seemed,
not in the main bit,
but in the little presentations seemed,

like me,
you know,
a lot of them were from agencies,

a lot of them were **absolutely terrified,**
you know visibly shaking as they were reading out their stuff,
and I thought,
I'm *not surprised you're terrified*

It didn't seem divorced,
to me,
that these were practitioners who were giving it a go,
I mean,
most of them were from the University of Birmingham,
I think that's because it was at the University of Birmingham . . .
but it didn't seem particularly divorced.
<pause>

JS: So has that conference, or being in this study,
has that made any difference to you…
to you?

It's made me think about what I do with these Diploma students,
certainly,
in terms of research,
the way in which I could just drop little words and so on,
which could make a big difference to the way people perhaps perceive themselves,

and what they do
the importance of these mini sessions and writing an essay,
that it's,
that it is research,
and perhaps more important to do that now,

and made me think about the M.Sc.
and why I'm doing it,
and whether I need to buy a suit . . .

I don't know if I'll bother *buying a suit,*
but, yeah, the images that it carries for me.

So it's been interesting for me,
hope it's been interesting for you.

Re-telling Andy's story : three weeks later

I mean should it be a bit more serious than this?
I mean we do do things,
but it's not structured,
I suppose,
it's not structured at all.

I rush in there,
you know,
I eat my sandwiches, we talk about the students,
I rush to the,
you know . . .
this is what it is as a part-time tutor.

It's all rush, rush, rush,
and it **is** a rush,
you know I have to bomb up here on my bike
and get there at 12.30 and it is a **rush.**

I mean we've had some meetings round at
Someone's house,
and even that's been a rush,
well, it's been a rush for me,
the others kind of like,
oh well,
I'm not doing any work,
self-employed work that afternoon,
so we can have the afternoon,
and I'm like,
I can give you 2 'til 3.

I can't think,
I can't actually think of what I was feeling
or thinking through quite a lot of
that conversation
Apart from maybe wanting to
get it right in some way,
or come up with something interesting,

you know,
you've gone to all this trouble,
and you've got all these

tape recorders

and stuff.

You're coming here to interview me,
and I'm like, well, you know . . .

I don't know really.
I think that was what I was feeling through a lot of it.
I would like to come up with something
that would be interesting.
Just wanting to please.

<pause>

Was that useful?

JS Yeah, brilliant, really good value!

Andy Did I do all right?
<laughter>

Co-constructing Andy's story-the Second retelling

Andy was a very new member of staff and the youngest member of the team. He had trained as a counsellor at the University of Bristol, but this was before 'my time' and I had only come across him once or twice at staff training days. At the time of this conversation he was about to start a research methods course that I was going to be teaching. All of this may have been a factor in this conversation very much keeping very safely within the parameters of the topic and the workplace rather than straying into any personal issues for Andy. Another factor may have been that this was the shortest conversation that I had because Andy was talking to me in a gap between clients at his workplace. Hence, there was less time for the 'ordinariness' that Grace spoke of around cups of tea and daily life. The interview took place in a counselling room in a busy agency with me in the 'client's chair'.

This core text started with what became very important feedback for the management group in terms of the design of the postgraduate diploma in counselling at the University of Bristol. In re-telling this story of 'taking the research out' Andy also began to develop an alternative version . We had recently redesigned our over-assessed and over-loaded professional diploma so that the

dissertation element now became an optional follow-on master's degree. In doing so, we had not considered taking research 'out of' the diploma course, but this was how Andy saw it, together with some other staff and students.

This conversation fed directly into some swift amendments and updates of guidelines for the case study component of this course, in order to emphasise a research-mindedness and emphasise ethical considerations. This was an example of my research project feeding back immediately into the workings of the organisation that was being investigated.

In his explorations and deconstructions of the possible meanings of the word research, Andy traversed many of the definitions that had also emerged form the survey in part two, such as informal and formal research and research structures defined by the pursuit of a higher degree. He came down in favour of a local preference for 'a climate of finding out for yourself'. In this re-telling Andy re-authored his own definitions of research to include not only the creation or development of something new, but also the whole arena of interest, agency, critical thinking and what I would describe as 'research-mindedness' (although he did not adopt this terminology when it was offered.) Andy returned several times to these considerations about the diploma students and I wondered, although I did not ask, whether he thought he ought to be focussing on them and that this would be my expectation.

Andy was the only other member of staff who had attended any of the BAC research conferences, which he had experienced quite differently, it seemed, from the dominant story in the department that research was 'divorced' from practice and practitioners. I was curious, at the time, and wanted to know why he was not surprised that the practitioners presenting at the BAC conference were terrified. Andy expressed these ideas with great strength of feeling. It would have been interesting to know what was terrifying and whether Andy would have been terrified and also whether he could have imagined himself having a go. All these questions ran through my mind at the time, but I went on to ask something much less immediate and the moment passed. Much later I also regretted not asking him about his image of 'donning a suit' as someone entering an Msc course. I imagined that this had connections with cultural assumptions about privilege and status and perhaps also convention and being 'duller' (to quote Trish, above) but I had not checked these meanings out with Andy.

Andy's interest in undertaking research and attending research conferences made me realise that Lynn, Nancy, Heather, Andy and myself were the only staff members who regularly attended national events and conferences in the counselling sphere. Andy and I were the only ones who had attended research-focussed events. This had me wondering, again, about the impact of working conditions and contracts on staff development. Lynn, Andy and myself were all fully employed by organisations that could sponsor conference attendance, and Nancy and Heather were exceptionally motivated in this regard. The rest of the staff group, however, all worked as self-employed professionals, which made a difference to their economic ability to contribute to and benefit from gatherings of communities of researchers, or even practitioners.

These issues were triggered again in my mind when we returned to this conversation three weeks later. Andy's vivid description of the 'lot' of the part-time tutor in a 'rush, rush, rush' had me speculating again about the efficacy of so many of the staff being paid on hourly rates, with barely any time to meet, and about the effects of these kinds of working conditions on course development and updating. It seemed unlikely, listening to Andy, that the kind of community of researchers that had been envisaged sharing ideas by Nancy, standing around the photocopier by Heather, or co-creating their working environment by Grace was going to be able to materialise under these conditions.

I was also aware in conducting this study, of the paucity and scarcity of research into counsellor education and training. A plethora of courses exist, often working to well-established, nationally agreed codes of practice, but as yet there has been very little inquiry into many of the assumptions that abound within this training culture about privileging, for example, 'core' theoretical models or experiential learning environments (see: Connor 1994, Dryden et al, 1995, Feltham, 1997, Wheeler, 1998, McLeod, 1998, pp359-375, Coate & Murdin, 2001 for a discussion around core theoretical models and current consensus). This is, perhaps, not surprising given Andy's description of the lack of time available for reflection, let alone critical evaluation.

These issues have been raised already in different ways by Alexia, Sonya. Morag and Trish and will be raised yet again by James, Paul and Donald. Andy was raising these issues in a different way, in that as a full-time agency worker with a small time commitment to the university, he was positioned differently from freelance employees. His personal/local story was one of a 'full-time'

worker with commitments and duties to another organisation that were perhaps not always appreciated. In this respect he was making different identity claims to the rest of the staff group who either worked for the university or had independent commitments that they could juggle with more easily.

Andy also chorused what was becoming a 'habitual' story within the organisation of wanting to get it right, his stance being that he wanted to please me and come up with something good, since I had 'gone to all this trouble'. This idea of 'coming up with something' echoes Atkinson and Silverman's (1997) treatise about the distorted lens of the interview society and issues of 'performance' in research interviews. These concerns have come up frequently as participants have re-called their experiences of the first conversation. The first conversations have been more immediate responses, but the re-tellings have been more reflective about the interview process and about relationships with me.

It could be argued that all this transparent desire to please invalidates the study. I would offer, however, that such openness might also indicate the trustworthiness of the conversations, since they are being firmly situated within the context and cultural assumptions of a desire to 'get it right' either for me, or by the lights of the university. An attitude that quite possibly prevails in many an 'unexamined' research text.

Chapter Eleven: Core texts from James, Liz, Paul, Clare and Donald.

Fore word: A short explanation is perhaps required at the beginning of this last group of stories, since no 're-tellings' appear for either Paul or Clare. The box of audiotapes of all these conversations sustained substantial flood damage midway through this study and the tape containing the re-tellings of conversations with Paul and Clare was irretrievably damaged. Transcriptions of these conversations were, at this stage, inadequate and an 'action replay' would have involved us in a completely 'other' conversation some time later. The first conversations with Paul and Clare nonetheless make an invaluable addition to the study and I decided that these could stand on their own, together with my commentary.

James-Core text

I bring large organisational experience,
what goes on in business,
how interesting it can be,
how *nasty* it can be,

how complicated it can be,

Cowpats *all over the place,*
to use one of your expressions

I bring into the counselling field within this department
a sense of worldly realism,
of actually what does go on outside,
I hope that's helpful to people.

my experience is mainly corporate life
and I think people are so used to having things,
having life done to them,
that if you try to…

help them to do it themselves,
they don't know how to.

I'm thinking more in my counselling/facilitation role
outside
where my counselling philosophy is to be with people
while they work out the issues for themselves
and think them through themselves,
and make some decisions.

Knowing what my sense of the university's approach to research
might be,
I'm very interested in
what's going on,
what's it's developing,
and what's useful and suitable to increase **developing,…**

how mine and other people's
knowledge bases at work,
and
in the counselling world,

My thinking in terms of research base tends
to involve organisations
and stress and change,
the biggies,

communication at work,

so, yes I do, think of myself as possibly an *action* researcher,

a bit of a sponge,
I take it all in.
I probably think of myself as a bit of a selfish researcher
I wouldn't set out to do
a specific piece of research
because I think it might make a difference,

but what I do notice,
and this is the kind of very informal action research,
if you like, about living life in the two arenas,
at this point in my life,
I'm more interested in *receiving* research
than creating it.

I see researchers
as primarily interested in
academic pursuits,
and I think I'm caricaturing a researcher there

they will glean a notion,
or something that they've observed
and actively find out more about it,
by various…
methods of inquiry,
and then be able to report that back.

some have the incredible thirst to push knowledge forward,
and to be able to impart that,
knowledge for sharing,
if anybody should want it,

and I think others…
just do it because it's expected of them,
and I think others do it,
like people do Ph D's (sticks tongue out)
so that they can get the book *published*,
so sometimes…

I wonder about the *motives* of researchers

particularly if
it seems to be obscure
because I am only really very interested in practical application of
research

And that application could be…

that it just actually
…not shapes the cage…

if it *rattles* the cage,
and makes people talk,

then that particular piece of research
might not have readily apparent application,
but it may be
the catalyst,
that's actually started another ball rolling,
there's a range
of why people approach it,
and how they do it.

I think that the typical university researcher
spends a lot of time here,

so I think they would be more
full-time employees
so
that time is set aside
in the working week,
to at least
do some of the research.

it's like me
for instance,
if I wanted to do a Ph. D.,
as an external tutor

I couldn't afford three grand a year.
I **could,**
but I don't know whether…

I'd **want** to **spend** three grand a year at the moment,
on it,

and
where would I find the time?
I've no idea where I would find the time,
you know.

I think you need to be, to be well into the University system,
and I think therein lies the,
one of the dangers and ironies of it really,
to be very entrenched in the University system,
may give you tunnel vision. (hands flat to sides of face)

maybe there should be something in
terms of research …

<pause>

where they will link up with all the practitioners,
so that you've got the loop. (swizzles hands)
Or be the practitioner,
but is that practical in terms of time?

So that there's a foot in each camp really,
so that, notes can be compared about what's happening,
and what's going on,
and that might inform the research process.

And it would also keep the practitioner informed of the research,
and it would keep the researcher
informed of practice.

Re-telling James' story two weeks later

my reading and finding out about things
doesn't necessarily come first and foremost
from *counselling* journals.

I use the University system less and less,
and that's really,

again,
it's about practicalities,
and time-scales and that sort of thing.

Because when I work here,
I put my *roller skates* on
when I come through the door,

and take them off as I leave…

if half an hour was packed into an external tutor's day to allow them
to go down the library…..

I'm not suggesting that because ultimately,
it is my responsibility to actually keep informed,
but . . .

being part of a research team would probably
give me some encouragement
and impetus
to actually go and do something about researching,

so I think it would be very useful.
Do you want me to say more about that?

JS: Yes, If you like. I'd be really interested in your ideas about what a research climate here would look like…

It looks like…
it's the hub of some very creative
And enterprising research
Where people have put a lot of effort into it…

and counselling organisations and agencies around the country,
and preferably around the world,
know of us,

and respect us,
and would ask us for our views
what do we know about…

and do we have any suggestions
or have any of our research team given any thought to that,
or done'''
any writing on it,
and do we have anything *available*?

Co-constructing James' story : A second re-telling

James had been an M.Sc. student at the university and is now working there one day a week in a very specific role. This interview, like James' description of his time at the University, was also spent on roller skates, squeezed in between teaching commitments and a train to catch. Both the interview and the re-telling were short and somehow rushed.

James came from a very different working environment to many of his colleagues and his very different 'take' on the meaning of researcher was perhaps a reflection of this corporate world wherein 'research and development' departments were commonplace settings, evaluating, designing and experimenting with new ideas and products. James's local understanding of 'researcher', whether this was an action researcher, or a selfish researcher, was of someone who absorbs and is informed by research and he had a much clearer sense than many of his colleagues that he was, for the moment, much more interested in receiving then creating research.

He also fell back into what was becoming the dominant cultural narrative of researchers as people primarily interested in academic pursuits, some of whom had a thirst for knowledge and the others, such as 'people who do Ph.D.'s', and produce publications. James emphasised this commentary on my own purposes by sticking his tongue out (just in case I did not get the point!). He moved backwards and forwards across these local and dominant narratives throughout both the initial conversation and the re-telling.

He described university researchers as those with tunnel vision, whereupon I missed an opportunity to ask about the kinds of vision that other researchers might have which might have been an alternative entry point. He continued this separation of his identity claims from those of the university again in his re-telling and re-affirmed his membership of a different cultural group

by envisaging a research climate of enterprise and world renown instead of the community or cooperative activities visualized by Nancy, Grace and Heather. He did begin to re-author the research arena as one where researchers and practitioners linked up and 'got the loop' although this was not a story he pursued.

What did emerge as a strong local narrative for James, which linked with stories from Andy and Paul, would seem to me to read like an alternative to the women returner's version of the gender politics of counsellor training that had been articulated by Alexia, Nancy and Trish. The first version of an engendered story, described particularly powerfully by Nancy, had been of older women struggling to return to a world of work in which men had 'got there' faster, or more easily. A different story was now also emerging of men with a different relationship to work, earning money in a number of settings and operating within the female -dominated world of counselling with its strong tradition of voluntary work from women returners.

I was very struck by the cumulative effect of these alternative versions of engendered stories and the power relations between them. By the end of this study I had acquired quite a rich description. James was permanently travelling on roller skates around a number of different geographical locations and his sense of urgency echoed some of the stories from Andy and Paul and seemed rooted in the gender politics of what I might tentatively describe as being men in a women's world. These issues perhaps merit further investigation.

Another element in this story that seemed to be accumulating in my mind as 'of cultural significance' was the tone of James's comments about publications. These kinds of stories were re-told again by Lynn, Dora, Donald, Grace, Heather and Liz. I was reminded of the increasing stacks of interesting, unpublished 'grey literature' (see: McLeod, 1999, Goss & Rowland, 2000) in counselling research mounting on the shelves of university libraries. Many of the M.Sc. students at the University of Bristol had been completely engrossed in their research studies and were justly proud of them. Very few had been presented as conference papers (apart from the end of course conference) and still fewer had been published. I was becoming aware of the cumulative vehemence of these anti-publications claims. I was beginning to speculate about Donald's claims that practitioners and researchers had completely different relationships with the world of publishing. Was the world of counselling so private, so boundaried and confidential, that practitioners had developed a professional taboo about the 'public domain'?

Liz's story-the core text

JS: Do you see yourself as a researcher?

NO!!

JS: Why not?

Well, I wouldn't describe myself as a researcher
Because
I see a researcher as somebody
who **just** does research,

which is a real,
that is a judgment
I think.
So it's actually…
what they do is,
and this is a complete sort of stereotype,
they sit in
the library all day
in one of those cosy
little booths and..
they do things
which actually… don't ever really mean anything to the rest of us

that's a complete stereotype

somebody said to me the other day, in fact
and he *is a scientist,*
he said to me

'why don't you just write up what you're doing,
write it up and get an article out of it.'

I was talking about working with the postgraduates
and I thought,
'well I couldn't'
and he said 'well why,
you know that's what you're doing - do it and write it up'.
And
I suppose
that's research

It set me thinking,
"oh, actually I ought to"
because
quite a lot of the things I do
within Bristol University,
in my own small way
are actually quite ground breaking,

other people aren't doing them,
so maybe I should write it up,

I suppose I don't see it as *proper* research,
I see *proper* research as being something which is,
actually very new,

well...
I've just said haven't I ...
some of the stuff I'm doing
is actually within Bristol University.... **ground** breaking,

but it doesn't feel very intellectual or clever,
it just feels like somebody
who is learning from her own experience
as an adult student
and you know sort of taking it in
making some sort of meaning of it

so somebody saying that's research is,

WHAT?

Because I don't regard myself as an intellectual,
I'm intelligent
and I am able to apply...

but I don't really think I'm an intellectual,

that's where I am at the moment with it,
I'm able to see things very quickly,
spot them, put them into practice,
but I don't see myself as an i*ntellectual*

<pause>

maybe I actually want to challenge that,
I actually *do* feel
that I do keep up to date with things
because what I do in preparing...
is be as up to date
as I could make it,

I'm *surrounded*
by people doing research,
I mean it's a research
I think there is a research climate
it's part of the culture
and...
I just make sure that I'm up to date with things

It may be mistaken differences,
it's certainly a perceived difference.
it's always tied up with the practical
I mean
there's not much point **babbling on**
about some piece of research
if actually it's not relevant
to what we're doing there that day,
I think that's...

using research to inform,
I see it as using research to inform what I'm doing.

I actually wouldn't see myself going off
doing some sort of research
on evaluating the effectiveness of counselling put it that way,
it would be much more…looking at training

because it's what I *do*
and I suppose thinking,
thinking
out loud it would be,
I could imagine
I might want to look at…

why do we sit in a circle?
why do we spend, and I questioned this last year with the certificate…
we spent that *ridiculous* amount of time
establishing a group contract,

and nobody stuck to it

I know I swallowed a lot of stuff wholesale and thought
this was the way to do it
whereas now I'm questioning whether it is. …

is undoubtedly the way to do some… things…. because it works

J.S. ***Or it's maybe one way of doing something?***

I could see myself saying to students in a session
as part of a
one-day course or something
well…
something I'm involved in at the moment is

and…
this seems to be demonstrating that…
I could see it being very here and now stuff,
Very..
I couldn't see it,
I don't see it as doing some work,
writing an article,
getting it published

although I increasingly
do actually feel
that if counselling wants
to see itself
as a profession then it has to have people within it

who are **properly** trained

if you think of other professions, teaching, the Law, medicine, social work,

most of that training actually happens in an
Institution of Higher Education
I don't see therefore why counselling should be any different

I think it is possible to bring together

the emotional and the intellectual
in fact I think
it's essential in any teaching/learning group

to have the emotional
as well as the intellectual.

<long pause>

JS: So that's how you see things developing in the future?

Yes,

I can imagine people
buzzing around
about their business… and on top of things
quite together and sort of business like
which is maybe an odd word
to use
but business like
in the sense that people know what they're doing,
people know what they're doing,
professional, informed and buzzy.

And more confident
I think for me personally
I think more confidence
I know what I'm about …and confidence.

Students will be coming to
the University of Bristol
where people are fairly well known
and one of their books… was a key text on the certificate
that they did
wherever that was
and so

they've actually come here
because it's a fairly eminent place
to do this sort of training,

they are aware that there are other places
that they could do it
but they've made some choices
about what was offered here.
Which is different
from what may by on offer…

not necessarily better or worse,
but different.

it's like it'll be been tidied up.

Maybe **consolidation's** the word
it's more of a …
having gone through various phases

and I think at the moment
maybe
we're in the middle of some shift again,

yup. What else?.....

JS: Well, nothing really from me except... I Suppose I'm curious...
about how you experienced our conversation...was this what you expected?

Mmmmm,
it was certainly
OK

I'm not sure what I was expecting

I was very aware of talking as I was thinking
things were coming into my head
and I was saying them
and I know I do that anyway because it helps me to think,
to say things out loud

but I was very aware of that actually happening,
you'd ask me a question
and I'd think
"oh, I find that really hard to answer"

and then I'd find myself answering it

Well actually
what I'm left with is feeling
what I do
isn't that bad really

it is actually very interesting...
..... and demanding

Re-telling Liz's story one week later

when you said
"do you see yourself as a researcher",
what I noticed then
is straight away I said **"no".**

it's almost as if
I'm hearing it as a *pushing it away,*
I can hear that in my voice there
and it reminds me
of times when I've said...
"oh, I couldn't possibly do that",

I think you yourself said,
this is some years ago,

you asked me to run some sessions
I said
"oh no I couldn't do that"

and you said
"why"

and I couldn't think of a reason

so there's something in my voice there
Oh I could never do that"
sort of thing,
like all those old…..
And when I listened to it then,
I want to say
"why not, **you can**"

And also there's something about hearing it now,
I've sort of contradicted myself really
you know
you've started off with
"do you see yourself as a researcher"
and I'm *saying* "no"
and then I go and give you all these
things
I felt quite confronted with it I mean…

but actually listening to it now is like listening to yourself think.

so it's like
all these contradictions
on the one hand I'm saying
in my own small way this is ground breaking
in this institution,
but all I'm doing really is……
I can hear and feel those contradictions and,
it's like having a diary or

it does sound like a diary.
I can hear two different,
not two different people but two different….
the can and can't bit you know.

I'm not very **intellectually** clever, you know
but I am **intelligent.**

very unconvinced and you know
not really sure what she's talking about here but I'll sort of go along with it

it's something I've thought recently,
I'm not an intellectual but I am intelligent

God, am I so predictable?
that's awful
it just feels boring really

J.S. ***Does it***

what I do, is work quickly

in five minutes, I've jotted down a one day's course,
and yes I have got to flesh it out
but basically in five minutes

And I think I'm in real danger of getting into my
"if I can do that anybody can do it"

I'm starting to feel
Can't anybody do that
surely everybody does that

What do you mean you can't do it in *five minutes*
it's like a warning to me –
here we go again,
putting down something *because I can do it,*
because *I've* mastered it…

or mistressed it

J.S. ***How do you think you were feeling at the time?***

I think it, I think that it, I think its part of something;

I think the interview is part of something..

J.S. is it part of your journey? I had a feeling it was…

It's like it's got,
it's like it's in the middle. RIGHT.
Your interviews in the middle

J.S. ***Well interestingly I suppose, apart from, apart from you individually, the interview, by accident, is in the middle of something that's happening to us all,***
But it is also in the middle of something that's going on for you very very personally may be?

well it's a number of things,
I don't know, but there's just something,
there's been something around for me this term

about feeling angry at some of these stories I'm hearing
about young 18 year olds
being humiliated by university systems

So some of the things you asked me
or I think may be that's
the bit about
"do you see yourself as a researcher"
and I said "no",

in order to avoid something you sort of say
"oh I can't do it" you know,

I can't quite explain it but…
I could never do that",
"oh I told you I couldn't do it"
you know that sort of…
it's something about that

I suppose intellectually,
although I said **I'm not** an intellectual,
I think that's crazy
but actually I still feel it,

I mean I actually said to Irene the other week
"I don't think I could ever do a Ph.D."
and she said
"what a load of rubbish"
I feel I want to hit myself for saying that…

……so your interview has been part of all this

<Pause>

Why did you do this …what do you hope to get out of it?

JS. Well two reasons… firstly I wanted people to have an opportunity to… to reflect on their more spontaneous conversation,
also I wanted people to have the chance of commentary on the interview process,
which you are doing now,
or their relationship with me
and how it helped or hindered the research process to have a conversation with someone you knew.
It's not strictly IPR ., of course, because …

Yes, I see interesting… I think I have been too interested
in my own process to worry much about yours,
or ours….
Although I did want to get it right for you…
that's why I asked you that,

another version might have been,,,,
did I get the IPR thing right,
I'm not sure what it's for…

it was helpful for me though,

very helpful.

Co –constructing Liz's story: A second re-telling

Alongside Lynn and myself, Liz was the only other full-time university employee in this study although only just over half her time was spent with the counselling programme. Liz's emphatic 'NO!!' to the question 'do you see yourself as a researcher?' was the entry into what seemed to be an habitual story told, with increasing irritation, throughout the text. Indeed she moved backwards and forwards between the landscapes of meaning and action and between this habitual story that she was not a researcher, was not intellectual and could not possibly do a Ph.D. and an alternative version that she was up-to date and doing groundbreaking work. Liz's core text was almost a textbook example of narrative therapy, minus the therapeutic interventions, which she seemed to provide herself in her thinking out loud. Liz could explore the discontinuities in her story for herself and could also use them as points of entry into alternative stories (it occurred to me, from my position as witness, that this not only required intelligence, but

was also an intellectual achievement, although there was no space for this intervention in the conversation)

Liz moved backwards and forwards across descriptions of researchers as intellectuals who were possibly pursuing irrelevant goals, writing articles and publishing papers, to possibilities of being able to write things herself, define areas she would like to research. She could even support and sustain these alternatives with re-membered stories of my support for this in the past and of encouragement from 'a scientist' more recently. By the end of the conversation she was advocating a marriage between intellectual and emotional learning and imagining a future in which the University of Bristol had undergone a period of consolidation and was (with echoes of James) business like and well known for its research as well as its teaching endeavours.

In her re-telling of the conversation two weeks later, Liz seemed to have her eyes on the contradictions and discontinuities between these stories and saw this gap very clearly as the site for a re-authoring of her previously preferred position into 'why not, **you can**'. It seemed as though she was on the brink of moving into a different position on these issues as she moved backwards and forwards across the landscape re-telling the dominant habitual stories and the local stories. It seemed as though she was on the brink of embracing an alternative story, she could hear it emerging alongside her frustration with any backsliding that might occur and found her saying:

'I feel I want to hit myself for saying that…'.

This interview seemed to illustrate the power of telling and re-telling stories as a constitutive process. Liz could hear herself telling an 'old story' again and again in a way that was 'humiliating'. This interview was part of a process of moving to a different position, which at the same time seemed continually stumped by cultural and personal assumptions around 'being an intellectual'. However often she came back to it, she did not seem to be able to get around that word. This might have been a really useful moment to engage in an externalising conversation about 'being intellectual' and perhaps to use the intelligence that Liz had already embraced to explore, further sneak up on, get around, summarily dismiss re-design, conquer or embrace the business of being intellectual in some way (see: Epston & White, 1992,pp 7-72 and Bird, 2000,pp15-47)

Liz, however, was having a rich experience of her own deconstructing conversation, in which she was playing all the parts and, as she pointed out, was talking very quickly. It was very difficult and would perhaps have been unhelpful for me to intervene until asked to do so. Liz, like Sonya, Morag and Alexia, was in the middle of a process of discovery and re-authoring and she found the timing of this interview very helpful. Like Dora she was very interested in my purposes in inviting her into a follow-up conversation, which had clearly developed her experience of her narrative world, but she was only marginally concerned about getting it right. There was passing mention of this but really she had been 'too engaged in her own business' to concern herself with my process.

It occurred to me in listening to Liz, who appeared in many ways to be engaging herself in a conversation that I was witnessing, that there was a third party or parties present alongside us in the dialogue. In Liz's re-telling I picked out the voices, the old story, (which echoed Morag's 'old stuff' and 'censor', Alexia's old, old patterns, Trish's introjects from her father and Lynn's voices of anxiety) in a different way. In both literary and therapeutic traditions of conversation it is relatively commonplace to refer to these other voices that are entering the 'inner' dialogue. Hamlet and Macbeth were both tormented by these kinds of voices and there is, as Trish attested, a psychoanalytic tradition of introjects as voices that may once have been, but are no longer useful (Shafer, 19920 There is also a younger tradition of embracing the voices of remembered lives (White, 1997, pp3-93, Speedy, 2000b) or invisible guests (Watkins, 1986) as more positive contributions in therapeutic conversations but, as yet, there has been little recognition that this process may occur in research conversations and that this 'other' voice or third party may be a legitimate, albeit unrecognised aspect of those exchanges. Bakhtin (1986) suggested that there is a 'third presence' created by, but also constitutive of all conversations , which Gergen (2001, pp122-145) has begun to identify and explore with her investigations into the possibilities of 'social ghosts' in research narratives. It may be beyond the scope of this study to comment further, other than to speculate about the purposes of these conversations with other voices that were explicitly taking place during the construction of these stories and, perhaps, their antecedents and successors in other research studies.

Paul's story: the core text

in my position as a freelancer,
and as a part timer here,
I don't get paid to do research.

It doesn't bring me an income,
I only get an income from
counselling,
supervising and training,
so… I have to kind of concentrate on those things.

When we were doing the M.Sc.
I was **so fired up** about research,
I mean I just really wanted to **do** research,
I wanted a research post to be established
and was,
one of the reasons behind me saying at the time
"we need a journal here,
we need a counselling journal here to encourage research,"

the other bit is about connecting research to practice
and relevance
and the need to do that,

for me the big stumbling block is actually around,
what it's like in this department,
or in this university
I have to be motivated by what brings the dosh in,
I'm only here the one day a week,
and I'm paid on a casual basis,
so I kind of 'do the biz'
and then go away again,
any valuing is tied in with what the department has identified as a need,
a teaching need
and that they see me as a trainer being able to deliver.

I've got a building…. I don't know if it's a resentment….
that might be too strong…..

I feel there is a resentment thing
about reliance on casual staff
to drive a core programme
especially a core programme *around research,*
if research is valued
then the people helping the research
and driving the research need to be valued financially,
do you really value the research if…

you're not valuing the people helping to deliver the ideas?

when I get into thinking about research,
it's a process of,
it seems like a process of…
long termism,

in the way that any research evolves
there's an organic kind of element to it

in terms of the timing

in the pressures of the market place
it's hard to kind of marry the two up.

I think the researchers therefore have to be *protected* to some degree
from the pressures of the market place.
OK the long term effect is,
you've got to produce research **OR ELSE YOU DIE,**
but I think in the process
in order to be able to do research
you have to be protected a bit,

just as you have been by a sabbatical
and I don't think it's long enough personally
what you've got…

I don't see that effective research can be done,
because if you look at all of our team
for example,
they're all independent practitioners,
all sort of you know
having to kind of get by,
find ways of earning a living,

and research wouldn't earn us a living.
any research that we do,
we're going to have to do on top of how we earn our living,
and with a busy life
and a family
and everything else
other things take priority,
so **that's it** really.

I don't necessarily see myself as a counsellor for the rest of my life, but as …

A writer.

my original desire,
I think I've said this to you before,
was to write
and maybe that's what I'm moving
towards…

I am essentially having to be a pragmatist all the time
and I'm often too tired from the work
if I see *six* clients a day
by the end of the day
by the last bit of client
I don't want anything more to do with counselling
reading goes by the by

I do try and look at books, counselling books,
I might dip into the odd…
chapter here and there
but…

I haven't got the energy or the enthusiasm

I'd much rather kind of …
sit and play with my kids, or sit and play on the Internet if I'm going into brain stuff,
or go out for a drink with my mates,
than sit and read a book,

because that's when it would occur
I mean it's at night

and by which time I'm
too knackered.

So there, that's where I'm feeling very out of touch.
I feel very out of touch with…

the **excitement** that I felt during the MSc
I was focusing and spending time looking at ideas
and looking at how concepts and principles
and values all kind of mesh together
or what the conflicts were between them
and looking at the practice implications,

the excitement of all that …
I don't have the sense of any more.

That's a sadness for me because that's the root of
where I think my interest in counselling lies

I need the intellectual stimulus at the end of the day
To..

<pause>
more deeply understand the processes I'm engaged in.
but I don't have the time to do that or
I don't have the energy to do that,
and yet I know it would feed me, in the end,
I know it would feed the work in the end.

Just as time out does as well.
So I'm poor, I'm *very poor*
I mean in a *poverty* sense…
on
what is happening in the counselling world
or what are the developments in theory
and stuff
I think I've lost touch with it
and I think that's my weakness at the moment.

my reality…

but…

I have done research over the last couple of years
OK

a counselling in primary care scheme,
was set up and it was supposed to be evaluated
by the Health Authority
there was a concern among the counsellors involved that it was a mess,
we got together

I basically coordinated some qualitative research,
by the counsellors
and I wrote the report, based on the research
which then went to the Health Authority.
Now there is lots of problems with that research
but essentially it was an interesting piece of work to do,
so that's one piece.

The other piece that I suppose that I'm actively doing,
although I don't, grandiosely, call it my research
but I know it is,
is that in one of my surgeries
where I've got a contract
with the doctor concerned,

he pays me you know directly,

part of my contract with him
is to give a *breakdown* of the kind of patients that
I'm seeing across gender,
age,
problem areas that we're tackling,
length of time that I`m seeing them for and so on,
I'm doing ongoing collating of data.

I do this every quarter
I do some graphs and charts and pie charts
I don't do any analysis
but at the end of the year I'm going to give him an analysis.
I can say already that the number of male clients
that I'm seeing is,

whereas a year ago in that surgery it was 30%
there's now something like 70%

Now, I've got some interesting questions about why that is .

And that could lead on into designing some research
to actually address those kind of questions.

Is it something to do with his referral?
Is it to do with patients recognising there's male counsellor in the surgery?
Is it about the fact that there's more of a willingness for men to come forward,
because they know there's a male counsellor ?
What's happening there to bring men forward?
Are women frightened of the male counsellor?
There are all these kind of questions just around that one issue.
Suddenly I've seen **loads** more blokes, and I wonder why,

Research becomes an integral part of what I'm doing
and what I'm paid for
the answer to your question is…….
if you pay me I'll do it.
I mean that's got to be in there.

It's not about anything that you can't get your head around,
it's about what's frustrating you

or what's exciting you
it doesn't have to be something that **other** people do.

it will only come about if you as an individual see the purpose for doing it,
now the purpose for doing it for me is to maintain that contract with that doctor,
plus **it excites** me to kind of think about those things
have a bit of space in my brain,
but I, it's also got to feed me.

I'm just reminded actually that one thing I have done,
it feels like
I've not really done anything but…
I've signed up for the John McLeod thing at the BAC,
the research group at the BAC,
I've signed up for that.

I've put down some areas,
I can't even remember what they were now
that I'd be interested in researching,

something about spirituality,
building on my MSc stuff…

and men I think

so you know
I'm alive to the idea of doing research,
but how it fits in,
well
it doesn't fit in at the moment.

when I was in Greece over the summer,
I stayed at home whilst they all went off,
I stayed at the apartment,
had this balcony,
and I had a shower,
got my whisky and I started writing,
and I got up several mornings earlier than everybody else and wrote as well,
just anything that came into my head really,
and that's the only writing I've done really in ages,
absolutely ages,
having the space and clearing out everything else,
then the writing might occur.
Maybe then it's possible to sort of start experimenting a bit
with that kind of process really and seeing what emerges,

my life is normally so cramped damn full with responsibilities
and doing other things
and being for other people

<long pause>

well, I had quite a lot to say….

JS: you certainly did. Have you said it? Anything else you want to say….
say about the experience of this conversation, for instance?

Well I've enjoyed this immensely

I have actually really
liked
the way you've just gone with,

just sort of opened it up
and gone with it really,
I felt really attended to and heard and not imposed on,
actually.

I suppose I kind of was beginning to feel a bit
suspicious at one point,
about,
what point was that,

which was about the relationship with the university

that really was dispersed immediately because
I think that's *my paranoia*
that whatever I say might be used against me sort of thing.
That dispersed very immediately.

No,

and it's just really nice having contact with you again.
I suppose what I'm left with a little bit is…
something around not what you only do with it
but,

how will that change things?
I talked about the counsellors and trainers being open to change
as much as clients,
so in terms of what you do with me
and the others that you interview
and your Ph.D.,

I suppose that what I'm more thinking is…

Will that lead to some kind of change?
I don't need an answer to that,
there's a question there about ….

So what's this going to spark?
I mean good research…Makes a difference

that's the question *I'm* left with….

Co-constructing Paul's story : A second re-telling

As part of his full-time freelance consultancy business, Paul worked one day a week at the university. His contribution to the dominant story, woven in and out of this text, was a description of his identity as breadwinner, bringing home the dosh. This story included resentments against the working conditions that existed at the university, echoes of Alexia, Sonya, and James, and

momentary suspicions of what I might be up to as their 'agent.' He also told a very local story about his enthusiasm for research and understanding of its processes. He expressed regret that he was too tired to sustain this interest in his current lifestyle, but he later told an alternative story of being engaged in two research projects of his own and of his interest in the BAC research network. Despite being 'too knackered' at the end of the day to keep up with the literature of research, Paul was engaged with more research-based activities than anybody else in the staff group, including the fulltime university employees. I was reminded in listening to this, of the ambiguity around definitions of research and of the group of people I had identified in my survey, who saw themselves as 'writers but not researchers' despite having completed doctoral theses and written papers in refereed journals. James had described himself, as a researcher on the basis of wanting to be informed by and about research and yet Paul, who had been engaged in ongoing research projects ever since he had been 'fired up' on the MSc, did not.

An impassioned and connected local personal story expressed Paul's ambitions as a writer and, despite frustrations, of his emerging determination to clear out everything else and engage with this at times. This preferred description of himself as a writer was somewhat buried and it would have been good to have heard more about that.

Paul's last words in this conversation have been scribbled on a post-it note above my computer for nearly two years now, and I am haunted by the prospect of not meeting these expectations or, rather hopes, for my project. I have woken several times in the night to the echoes of these words and wondered why I am bothering with this thesis at all, except in order to get a Ph.D. for myself?

> 'so in terms of what you do with me
> and the others that you interview
> and your Ph.D.,
>
> I suppose that what I'm more thinking is…
> Will that lead to some kind of change?
> I don't need an answer to that,
> there's a question there about.
>
> So what's this going to spark?
> I mean good research…Makes a difference

that's the question *I'm* left with…'

Me too.

I was also struck, listening to Paul, with how weary he sounded. Trish and Andy and Heather and Morag and James had also all sounded very tired. I was reminded again, as I had been listening to Trish, of the professor of counselling who answered my survey suggesting that no-one could keep up his schedule of teaching, clinical work and research for very long. I wondered how long Paul could keep it up even without a heavy research overlay. I remembered my days as a full-time student counsellor, seeing eight clients a day (I now have three/four a week) and began to speculate about the long-term effects of counselling on the health of its practitioners (see: Horton, 1997, Bayne, 1997 and Henderson, 2000 for more about these concerns).

Such outcomes research as currently exists in counselling tends to be concerned with the short-term outcomes for clients, but what about the long-term outcomes for practitioners? It seems quite counter cultural, taboo even, to open discussions about therapeutic practices that sustain *counsellors* outside the domain of the narrative therapies (see: White, 1997, Speedy, 2000b).

There has been considerable discussion in the counselling literature about self-care in a demanding job (such as Johns, 1996, Horton & Varma, 1997) but not about finding less demanding and more enriching ways of doing this work. I was curious about this and wondered about its connections with cultural assumptions about women returners working part-time or in a voluntary capacity. Perhaps 'professionalisation' and the possibility of people earning a full-time, permanent living in this field might lead to seismic shifts within this rather 'protestant' ethic?

Clare's story-the core text

JS: So what does that mean to you?

So, so, and what does it mean for me?
I feel *flattered* that you want to talk to me,
and it feels familiar and not familiar
and it feels familiar
because I obviously know,
I know about you as a trainer,
as a tutor,
as a facilitator,
I know about you as a colleague for a term or two
……. and I know about,

I feel I know about you a bit as a person,
I mean not that I can separate…

I mean you are somebody who's very much is there,
because you are there in the middle
I feel connected and I also feel a bit *disconnected*
because this is different, so I sort of feel, you know, I'm sort of feeling my way for the . . . so
those things at the moment.

< Pause>

I suppose it's partly about articulacy.
Maybe that's something I bring actually, as well,
I think I'm reasonably articulate.

And literate..
and yet somehow that isn't seen as part of work,
and yet when I think when I was actually a student, an under-graduate here,
when I look back at my tutors and so on,
I mean they would be reading all the time,
they hardly did any teaching,
well, I mean they did, but . . .
but actually what they were there to do was to, a lot of them,
primarily, was research.

Which is different.
it's different, because here you're a practitioner as well.
I mean I did politics and sociology, it would have been a bit difficult to be
a *practising* politician

JS: So, I'm just wondering what a research climate might be like in counselling?

it's like sweating blood,
but I really did,
I actually enjoy research,
and I think I'm quite good at some aspects of it.

I mean it's lonely,
it's frustrating, it makes me furiously angry
and it's also very gripping and exciting,
and it's very intimate,
or, at least, what I was doing,
I felt was intimate.

that felt very **intimate.**
I always felt like, you know,
I'm giving you everything of me,
here,
which was true
it's both very personal,
I also strive to be impersonal as well,
but to hold the two together,

or at least certainly in the counselling research

I was striving to do that,
not terribly successfully,
I don't think…
but,
and I think if I did it,
if I did counselling research again,

I think I would be much more personal,
and I'd be much more in it,
in the middle of it,
and like I perceive you to do,
to be in the process,
and also to enjoy sufficient time and distance to be able to get out of it as well.

I'm trying desperately to think, you know, who he is,
there's one guy who writes, who's really on the edge,
who seems to me to be really on the edge of things and talks very,
very personally about himself
there's a different bit of me that sees that as being really quite *dangerous.*
I'm sort of thinking,
gosh, that's exciting and, but also, dangerous.
He's at on end of the spectrum, and then, then there are other people,
and they mostly are at the other end as well,
who are more impersonal and a bit dry.

this business of people who do research and people who don't,
and often it's men who do research,

and I was just thinking that....

that I was sort of categorizing
people who do research, as being in a safer arena,
almost,

actually the two can't exist without the other because it's like,
it's like
this whole systems thing

if you're being a counsellor and teaching counselling,
you can't do that in a vacuum,
you've got to know what's going on
in the field of research,

that should inform what you do.

and equally you can't do research without being a practitioner,
it seems to me,
otherwise you're getting out of touch with the reality of it.

So conceptually,
the two have got to go together,
and yet, in practice,
as a student,
it was always a difficulty for me,
almost like a parallel between integrating theory and practice,
and it's that interface
which is actually
quite a struggle to achieve...

JS: Suppose one night , while you were asleep there was a miracle and all this integration was made possible.

How would you know? What would be different?

So, that,
so that's sort of ….

what your research climate be about…
because it's about,
making the connection between what's happening here,
and the wider world
of counselling…

and the systems
of counselling,
and their connection to other systems as well…
.it might be like
being part of…
a global connectedness…

JS: Can I ask you about that?

I think it's really interesting…
last week in his session,
James copied a hand-out of the ACW journal,
where he was arguing
you know,
we hold these values of person-centred whatever…
with individual clients,
but we're not very good at doing them with organisations,
we're terribly judgmental,
oh,

bastard organisation,
you know,

all this stuff,
and actually what we don't do is
listen to the organisation
non-judgementally,
and in a way,
that's a very good example of
of a greater connectedness….

perhaps I'm thinking a bit more narrowly than you,
but, but….
it's like transferring those skills into a different arena,
and you're suggesting,
I think,
adding them to the rigour that universities have….
but as another dimension,
aren't you? . .
And I suppose that will just be an example
of a slightly different arena,
that's all….
I think that's really interesting,
.

And it's not a question of either/or,
and it's not a question of and/and,
it's a question of
what's appropriate…

And I suppose the
reality is,

most people are going to be practitioners,
and the only people who are going to be
researchers
. . . well, I was just thinking,
the obvious place to do research is in
the University,
I'm not quite sure whether that . . .
that is
the best possible place for the two to be integrated,
is it?

.I mean what would be the other way?
the only other alternative
is that the funding for the research comes from something real
and I don't quite know what that would be
that's the other way of doing it,
isn't it,
I mean like pharmaceutical research is always funded by a *particular lobby*. . .

but the trouble is,
then it's subjective,
if I don't like the outcome, I won't pay for it.

Oh, I don't know, I don't know really.
I was going to say, a learning institution like this is an obvious place for it to happen,
and,
at the same time,
where are the funds going to come from?
Where is the funding going to come from for research?

I mean, you know, to do research
you've got to be paid for shutting yourself away and reading a pile of journals, and . . .
which is not,
it's not fee-earning,
so, yes,

I'm sort of struggling a bit here.

<long pause>

JS: well you don't have to struggle any longer
if you don't want to,
we could stop right there…

Phew, is that it?
I thought for one moment you were going to pull out some **castanets.**
I don't know,
I don't know where that came from . . . (laughs)

You've not got a hidden camera in here,
have you?
what are the sort of *confidentiality* things on this?
I mean I kind of trusted you to....
that it'll be all right,
but I just wonder what . . .

JS: What I'm going to do,
I think it's quite complex...

Co-constructing Clare's story: A second re-telling

Clare had been a student at the university very recently and currently had her foot 'half in the door' with a temporary teaching contract on the counselling programme. This gave Clare a very different relationship and history with me to many of my other colleagues. Clare began by pronouncing herself flattered to be asked to take part in the study and continued to be engaged in the conversation in what seemed to be a very cautious and polite way. The contrast between this text and the conversations with Nancy, Morag and Dora, for example, illustrates the fact that these conversations were not taking place on a level playing field and that the 'pecking order: issues of power' (Grossman, et al., 1999) were manifest. I would suggest, as outlined in Chapter Four, that this was no reason to reject or distrust the conversation with Clare, any more than any other, but rather, highlighted the need to be transparent about the relations that surround it. As Dora suggested in the Chapter Ten, a more socially distant 'market researcher' would have co-constructed very different stories from these conversations. The conversations with Clare were between a very recent student and ex-tutor. She had since become a new tutor on a programme where I was manager. (for a discussion of similar issues of intimacy, equality and power in a feminist research team, see: Grossman, et al, 1999)

This interview also exemplifies the fact that the art of narrative questioning is only as good as the questioner's awareness of context and the ways that they are 'situated for discovery' with regard to the issues outlined above. Clare heard my question about research climates in counselling and later 'miracle question' in terms of her own local experience as a student. She later worried that she might have been 'thinking a bit more narrowly' than her interviewer, which in terms of her agency in the conversation was an interesting commentary on my own loss of the plot. In fact, by answering the questions in ways she wanted to, Clare was able to tell a local story about her experience as a student entering the research domain at the University of Bristol and experiencing

our research-teaching environment. Like Paul she found this a compelling, although also isolating experience. Hers is an interesting local commentary on the issues raised by the North American literature. Clare did not seem 'put off' research by the climate provided by the university, far from it, but nonetheless saw her post-qualifying world as an either/or world in which most people would be practitioners; her recent experience had demonstrated to her that an integration of research and practice was 'a struggle to achieve'. It would have been interesting to deconstruct this struggle and explore its possibilities and parameters, but unfortunately, I entered the gap after Clare's contribution with a huge, global question that threw us off this trajectory. Clare's considerations about the possibilities for achieving funding for research into counselling and the comparisons with medicine also reminded me that one of the key reasons that medical workers have such an interest in keeping up research, compared with counselling workers, is because interest is well funded by the specific economic interests of pharmaceutical and related companies. I had a chilling flashback to discussions about 'managed care' at a family therapy conference in Boston:

> 'Prozac versus anti-depressants…well, a lot of money went into that research, but who would fund research into talking therapies versus Prozac? I mean, who would fund that? In whose interests is that?'
>
> (Madsen, 2000)

All of which led me to speculate, rather pessimistically, that a firmly constructed bridge between research and practice might possibly be beyond the economic means of counselling in the U.K.

Clare offered a very different position to the dominant cultural assumptions that I was forming that these conversations had been enjoyable, useful and a 'good time was had by all'. 'Phew is that it' offered a completely alternative version and her 'jokes' about the castanets and the hidden camera spoke to an absent, semi-explicit story about her anxiety and sense of not knowing what was going on, or what was going to happen next. The end of this core text offers something of an interrogation of constructs of 'ongoing' informed consent. Clare was working at a university, had just completed her own dissertation, had been sent information about the study in advance, and had had a conversation with me beforehand about what would be involved in this conversation, particularly in terms of member checks on the project and safeguarding confidentiality, etc.… Nonetheless, at the end of this conversation, during which time she had not been entirely relaxed,

Clare still needed to ask about 'sort of confidentiality things…'. This conversation reminded me, as a teacher of research, that you 'could not really be too careful' around these issues and that they need ongoing, two-way discussion.

Donald's story : The core text

My experience of training institutions
is that they attract people in terms of
of the thinking model,
and people with a **feeling** model,
which is the opposite, on the whole,
aren't attracted to current teaching roles.

That often leaves feeling people feeling inadequate on courses,
because they come thinking that they're supposed to be like their teachers
who can think very clearly, and write well,
do research well,
write essays well,
and the other side doesn't often get…..
through in my experience
I'm fascinated by that, fascinated by it.

It's one of my reasons for being in education,
in the trainer role. . .

it's not the only reason . . .

this real sense I have
about being a feeling type,
and being marginalised in institutions,
not being valued,
and feeling that that was,
at the same time that I felt my training also affirmed that side
And I wanted to be,
I wanted to be there,
because I felt my….
my type was equally as valid,
and so I wanted to be there and found a niche for myself.

in terms of my motives.
I've had it all my life really,
this ability to be able to cross boundaries and cultures . . .

and be in different camps at the same time.

I did that in the church, in my family, at school,
it's not something I planned to do, it's just . . .

a place I tend to find myself.
it's not *accidental,*
that I, as someone who describes myself as having a psychodynamic approach,
will be working in an institution which describes itself as person-centred

I don't know if this is true,

but I know it's my perceived view of it,
and that is that somehow I'm seen as different here,
by the people I come into contact with . . .

I think is to do with how I run the groups here,
especially the skills groups and supervision groups,
and they're to do with my group training, I think that's my group side of me,
because I enjoy groups *enormously,*
I value groups.

I love it when groups make **discoveries**,
and when the group feels proud of something and feel good about themselves . . .
and that happens not because I'm wise,
or because I can tell a student what's happening in their counselling relationship,
but because suddenly the group comes alive and sees things.
my task to facilitate that is what I enjoy.

I used to sit in groups and when people made insightful remarks,
I'd feel terrible,
I felt I as the supervisor should be making all these remarks . . .
Fortunately, in my advancing years,
this is no longer a problem,

<pause>

JS: So can I ask about your relationship with research?

research
I've never done it,
though,
though I'm interested in it,
and enjoy reading the results
of some kinds of research
and have enjoyed,
you see, it's interesting,
all the dissertations
I've ever read haven't been this,
what do they call it?
quantitative research,
it's never been that…

but I've never done the other kind of research,
never,
though I've been involved in it here,
and marked essays and marked dissertations.

One of my students,
a great ability to do that kind of work, and I enjoyed some of that,
I mean, I learnt so much .
he's the kind of mind that seems to bring together that,
that type of research within counselling,
and makes it relevant to the work I do,

so it's not arriving at the end of the day with percentage figures on this or that,
it arrives with kind of preponderals,
which informs my work.
So I certainly do enjoy it.
But I have very little inclination to write.
I often wonder

if it will happen one day.

Like everyone **you** have to write,
don't you?

I hate the process,
I quite enjoy reading it afterwards.

I'm much more verbal than written.
I am interested in finding out,
I'm interested in testing…
but I'm not sure I have that amount of,
if,
I'm interested in doing the testing myself in any written form,
in doing some large piece of work to find that out,
I'm very interested in what other people have done
and read their results,

I do it in my own way in terms of my own supervision
and supervision groups
and so on,
we look at things,
and test them out.
If someone, for example, if someone says in my supervision group,
"Well, I suddenly had an intuition that . . ."
I say, "Where did that intuition come from?",
and I'll say, "Was there **any other evidence** to back up your intuition?",
in other words, how can that be tested?
So that might be an approach I would take in the supervision,
which I think is a research model,
in fact, it's not just accepting something at face value,
it's saying,
how can you support that in doing . . . ?

for my own benefit I'm now,

recording all my own interventions in the groups I run,
together with the background to those interventions,
and looking at the way in which I do that
but that's for
my own benefit,
and I talk it over and discuss with Roger

there's a possibility of writing things,
and places where you can get them published,
and perhaps we daren't….
I just . . .
it did occur to me to say that groups thing,
I thought,
well maybe I *would write*. . . .
but that would be sometime ahead….

But I'm not going to push it,
I'm past the age where I now do things because I feel I should,
or want to get recognition or something.

This lot…. [waves hand around university building]
they're under enormous pressure to write,

and how they feel less worthy
if their other colleagues are writing things
and they're not and,
it's dreadful.

I think that ....
if I'm acknowledging all the different parts of me,
There was something else – now what the hell was it?
Oh, it'll come back, it'll come back . . .

something I represent here....

Re-telling Donald's story four weeks later

Well, I think,
the difference is that the researchers that I referred to,
in that way,
are researchers who **publish**.

so that would make them someone
who makes research
and then shares that research with whoever,

and also maybe they're also more familiar with research
techniques and methods than I am.

Because they're in that world.

I'm not sure how we'd
do it differently...

but I think
there's a question that comes before that,
and that is,
why does this discrepancy exist?

I suspect it's to do with
counsellor's fears of being observed,
being proved wrong or useless,
or something

I think it's to do with the suspicion that researchers
haven't got anything to teach us,
because who the heck are they?
they're not even **involved**

they're just sitting on their *little white clouds*
looking down at ....

what else would it be?

time?
Inclination?

Counsellors may choose to do other things with their time,
but why aren't there more who would choose,
make a choice of research,

actually,

I mean, you'd think that would normally happen,
but why doesn't it?

I don't know
it may come into types, also,
people,
the type of person choosing to be a counsellor...
might not actually be the type of person
who would relate too much to research,
I don't know . . .
.
but that's a different model from what you're working in,
because you're working
in the model of the counsellor as researcher,
and in that model they've separated
the counsellor from the researcher.

And they don't meet, do they?
And maybe that was also ……..
in your previous research [authors note: the pilot study]
you told me about

where people actually didn't even mention research,
so actually that had been separated,
also

(pause)
I mean, I have no idea what's been going on here

that's very important,
isn't it,
really very important,
the way in which the process affects you,
changes you,
and is what's happened.

I don't know if it's true of researchers,
it's certainly true of my counselling,
it's not to do with what I do with my clients,
it's what my client does to me,
and I can never foretell what that will be.
But if a client does something to me to get him better
mind you, I want to qualify that all to you . . .

I used to say that,
if a client had changed,
the counsellor has to change.
If the client sees the counsellor change,

then they can change themselves,
or something like that.

well, I wish you well,
….. it sounds **fascinating….**

What's occurring to me
it's quite different from what I said before really,
is about the nature of research,

we don't go on to write,
write it up
and I'm wondering
if that's actually the academic's preoccupation
with writing it up
that's the interest of the academic . . .
where it's
not the interest actually,
of the pure practitioner,

it's the interest the academic brings
to it as well,
and it's also become
in academic terms
as far as I understand from my knowledge…

the writing up of our papers has become an obsession,
because the whole thing
about research
is being marked on,
institutions get money for it…
and so you have to be producing
paper
after paper
after paper.

and after a while,
your own status is made
in a number of papers
<pause>

or not . . .

you asked some very interesting
questions
in very interesting ways
We've gone down quite unexpected avenues,
not new avenues exactly…but we seem to be traversing them differently.
What did you just ask…and how did you decide what questions to ask?

JS: The questions I asked you when we started again were…

Co-constructing Donald's story: A re-telling

Donald was a long serving member of the counselling programme team who had always contributed a very specific input on one day a week. His habitual story was one of difference, which he offered not as an inevitable or accidental happening but rather one of deliberately crossing boundaries in his life. Donald's local research story was also not to the dominant theme of not having the time energy or inclination to keep up. He offered an alternative version of enjoying

reading research and enjoying the stimulus he received from students engaged with their own projects. Donald had an alternative take on the purposes of his own research, as a practitioner, which were not necessarily to do with writing. This was a story he returned to and described more richly in the follow-up conversation. Like many of his colleagues he voiced a strong critique of the current trend in assessing the worth of academic staff on their publications output. He was not himself interested in writing, yet he was involved in researching his own role as a group worker and in encouraging a curiosity and research-mindedness amongst his students.

Donald returned in the re-telling of this conversation to the issue of different research purposes for practitioners and university researchers and began to develop an emerging local story concerning publication. For Donald, the pivotal difference between research practices for therapists and researchers was the outcome. For researchers the outcome was publication, but for practitioners this was not relevant. It would have been interesting to expand these ideas around what was relevant to practitioners. At the time I had understood him to mean that the purposes were more local and were centred on improving practice, but I later realised that I had not explored this fully. In retelling the stories Donald reflected again on the discrepancies between research and practice and put forward several of his own ideas, many of which were later echoed by Clarkson (1998, xvi), who observed:

> 'it is perhaps, unsurprising that the possibility of having research demonstrate the superiority of a competing approach over one's own may be met with some resistance and scepticism.'

He moved back and forward across his story of the academic obsession with writing up and producing paper after paper after paper and while he was doing so, for added emphasis, he pointed to a poster on my office wall which amused him. The poster included a quote from the novelist Flannery O' Connor:

'Do universities stifle writers…if you ask me, they don't stifle nearly enough of them…'

This part of the conversation ended similarly to those with Dora, Liz and Clare by expressing curiosity about the purposes and nature of the interview, although Donald's commentary interrogated the use of narrative questioning more specifically and the ways this had influenced him not to go down different avenues, but to do so in different ways.

At the beginning of this conversation Donald interrogated his own position as a 'psychodynamic' therapist working in a purportedly 'person-centred' setting. I would experience considerable discomfort in placing Donald in any way as the 'control' to my experiment, but at the same time I was very aware about the markedly different assumptions that Donald expressed about research, practitioner research, research-mindedness on the part of students and keeping up to date with the literature. Donald clearly read widely and earlier in the conversation (not part of these stanzas) had commented on the excellence of the articles in the counselling journal, which, unlike Trish, he read regularly from cover to cover. As a practitioner he had no desire to write, but he had a keen interest in research and in researching his own practice. In many ways what he said had echoes in comments from Liz and James, but there was something about Donald's critical curiosity such as his 'nose for' an opportunity to deconstruct my style of questioning, for example, or his challenge to student`s assumptions about intuition, that seemed qualitatively different.

I was uncomfortably reminded of recent suggestions in some of the literature cited in Part Two of this study, proposing that humanistic and person-centred counsellors currently had a particular reluctance to research themselves (Bohart, et al., 1998, McLeod, 2001a). Had an overemphasis on 'personal experience' led to a devaluing of contemporary research literatures and an uncritical stance? My own enormous sense of betrayal and of 'letting the side down' in even writing such a thing, had me wondering if, perhaps, there was something in it.

Chapter Twelve: Reflections, upon the 'accumulated' Bristol Stories

I am reluctant to add to the stories presented in the last three chapters. In adding my reflections I may well take away from the impact. I have no desire to 'round these stories off', or neaten the edges in anyway. There is a danger that in making any more meaning of these narratives I may, as Grace suggested 'shake and shake them' until they disintegrate.

About halfway through the process of constructing the narratives I became very engaged with the possibility of writing a kind of organisational life history (Rhodes, 2000, Czarniawska, 1998). I began to develop a professional, or at least local 'meta - narrative' that moved across a progressive continuum from the early pioneers of counsellor education (such as Dora, Donald and Lynn) through the entrepreneurs who developed more of the current infrastructure (such as Nancy, Heather, and myself) to the newly emerging professionals (such as Andy, Liz and Clare).

It is very tempting to come up with a grand narrative, a clear-cut discovery, and I briefly imagined the 'glory' of "Speedy's research shows…". But it doesn't. These categories (pioneer, entrepreneur and professional) were not identity claims my colleagues were making about themselves and this over-arching story was so littered with exceptions, discontinuities, interruptions, and inconsistencies that eventually I abandoned it. As Ruthellen Josselson (1999) observed:

> 'Narrative research is a process of inquiry that embraces paradox and cannot, therefore be defined in linear terms' (pxi).

Differently positioned groups

What did stand out for me from these conversations was the difference in the way the earlier counsellor educators in this group positioned themselves in their relationship to research, researchers, and the academy compared with the way the more recent graduates perceived these issues.The earlier group (Lynn, Heather, Trish, Morag, Donald, Dora, Grace) were 'accidental academics' that experienced some dis-ease with this identity and considerable tensions in their relationship with the academy. As I listen to Heather wondering whether researchers started out as human beings, or to Lynn seeing them as the 'dead' end of university life, I can almost feel the scars of battles hard won in graduate studies committees at this, and other universities. Apart from

Donald, and Morag, who had deliberately stepped into academic cultures knowing they would be out of place, most of the earlier group had 'fallen into' a university environment. This had not been a personal or professional strategy.

By way of contrast, the group of newer staff members had all chosen to train as counsellors at a university themselves. They saw this as an 'appropriate' setting and perhaps even the natural home for a developing professional education programme. With the exception of Andy, they still perceived major differences between practitioners and researchers. They were aware that research was privileged within academic settings and of the emphasis on publications. The earlier group formed a strong critique of this. Perhaps the most sharply defined difference between these two groups emerged in discussions of 'imagined' future research environments.

The first group imagined a co-operative, creative community of researchers, developing research in a 'different way', alongside their teaching. Heather's analogy of 'another chair at the table' comes to mind. The latter group imagined a higher profile and international 'renown' and an institution providing the evidence-base for counselling practice as an up-and-coming profession. These imaginings are not mutually exclusive and Trish, Andy and Donald for instance put forth a mixture of all these ideas.

It is perhaps not surprising that the people who had first established counselling training programmes, people who had chosen to work in a new, unheard of, experimental, alternative field had different visions of the future than the 'newcomers'. The newcomers in this instance had all trained at the University of Bristol and undertaken a BAC recognised, post graduate diploma course. They had joined a much more established field that was beginning to consider itself a profession rather than a 'barefoot coalition'.

I am aware, writing this, of my own sense of losses and gains. The newer staff, not necessarily imagining themselves as researchers, are nevertheless strongly in support of a research base to their work and of a partnership with university departments in this. They position themselves for the most part differently from researchers, intellectuals and writers, but do not disregard professionalisation, evidence-based practice, or constructs of 'international renown' as a research centre. The earlier group use very different language, position themselves differently and with the exception of Trish, they question much of the conventional wisdom in research practice.

Professional status and international renown are not at the forefront of their visions and, indeed, Donald later expressed some considerable wariness about these ideas:

> and the gain will be
> that dialogue will be invigorating
> and the loss will be
> we will find it harder and harder
> to say 'I don't know, I haven't a
> clue, no idea, never thought
> about it.....'
> ....because we will have
> further to fall
> like those Bristol medics.....
>
> There's a danger, a terrible danger
> that we may end up doing so
> much research to prove the
> efficacy of counselling that we
> actually start to think we know
> what we are doing.
>
> That would be terrible!

At the University of Bristol, at least, there has been a gain in professional confidence and expectation. A research climate is envisaged, to a large extent, as part of this process. For myself I also have a sense of loss of the more critical, questioning and, according to Morag at least, downright 'bollocks to you' attitudes of the forerunners of the profession. It is perhaps inevitable that as a profession 'comes of age' it loses some of its barefoot, outlaw and maverick tendencies. I am more concerned at what might be a less questioning, less critical and less 'experimental' standpoint. This is a small group of people, and they might tell these stories very differently today. The newer staff may even have been saying what they thought I would like to hear. Nonetheless, I found myself wondering whether the current consensus within accredited training for counsellors was somehow producing less critical and questioning graduates. Dora, Trish, Donald, Alexia, Heather, Lynn, Morag and myself, for instance, all undertook counselling training in an era when much was experimental, uncertain and contradictory. The later group, particularly Sonya, Clare, Liz, and Andy, had all experienced a well-established training, including some common, nationally

agreed givens, within the framework of a 'core theoretical model'. Had these attempts at establishing 'standards' also led to some conformity and to a less questioning environment?

Social processes and social justices?

One striking impact of these accumulated stories, as far as I was concerned, was in the sense of insularity, indwelling, intimacy and personal knowing compared with the extraordinary lack of interest in context, policy, political agenda or social justice. Each unique story is of itself, interesting, fascinating, even, and speaks of a particular person's life. It perhaps does not stand out from the stories you might imagine hearing from anyone working in the helping professions. The accumulation of all the stories, the one following the other, runs the risk of being rather boring, repetitive, a bit of a slog perhaps, but leaves me with an accumulated sense of the de-contextualised working world of counselling trainers and therefore, presumably, counsellor training and education. I have found this quite startling. I have a sense of the inner world, family life and immediate workplace surroundings, relationships and circumstances of most of these participants. I have very little sense of their engagement with the complex system of the university of Bristol as a whole. I have very little sense of many of my colleagues exhibiting a desire to wrestle with, and change the power relations or develop a critique of systems of practices within the university structure in the way that, for instance, the nursing profession has done (see: Witz, 1992, Davies, 1993, 1995). There is little or no mention of wider issues of political or social policy and almost no critique at all of counselling itself as a socio-political process. It is not that people don't want to change the world (Trish) or work with local agencies (Liz, James and Grace) or become a centre of 'international renown' (James, Clare), but rather that they did not seem interested in developing the critical frameworks that might support these changes. Viewed through Humphries' (2000) four requirements for an emancipatory research paradigm, the counselling programme is certainly, potentially, a research culture in which locating the 'self' in the research process is core. There is also a sense of being explicit about tensions and how they resolve. The other elements of this framework, however, 'exploring political/power dimensions' and 'linking research to wider questions of social inequality/social justice' (ibid, p13) are as absent as they were at the beginning of this study. There may be many other groups of university researchers who also do not adhere to these values, but the social context seems so much harder to ignore, and so much more surprising to ignore, when the students and stakeholders in the programme are workers in the

local drugs projects, spinal injury units and HIV/AIDS support agencies (to name but a few). I found this very uncomfortable. I was reminded of the difficult questions that the 'just therapy centre' put to the helping professions industry in New Zealand and feeling intensely disloyal, I wondered how the counselling programme at the University of Bristol might fare, facing these questions:

- 'Has the profession of therapy been captured by another group who believe in low taxes and minimal social policies?
- Are we paid off to be silent given our enormous knowledge of people's experiences?
- Are we in fact making money out of people's misery and thus have no interest in reducing their problems at root?' (Waldegrave, 2000).

I am sure my colleagues will feel equally uncomfortable, even outraged reading this section (hence my feelings of disloyalty), and yet, an accumulated reading of the Bristol stories does provide a very insular, inward looking unexamined 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1980) within the culture of the counselling courses programme. I had uncovered something about my working climate that I myself found very uncomfortable. I have put this section into my thesis amidst some personal disquiet and anxiety. These are uncomfortable, exposing and worrying findings.

Gender, counselling training and research:

The younger men (not Donald) and women telling these stories were positioned differently. Many of the women were explicitly aware of the gender divide between women as returners to the workplace as practitioners and the more male-dominated world of universities, of research and publishing and of the up and coming younger men moving into the counselling arena. These conversations resound in my head as an echo of Davies's (1996) treatise on 'gender and the professional predicament in nursing'. These same women, such as Heather, Nancy, Alexia, Morag and Lynn (and, to be fair, Paul and Donald also) were also excited by notions of community and the sharing of ideas in a future research environment. I was reminded of the work of Gilligan (1982, also Lyons, 1983) and her team and of the different ethics of community, interdependency and mutual care giving that have been associated with women's culture and of Worrell, et al., (1999) maintaining a feminist ethics of university education. I found myself speculating about the RAE in British Universities, the kudos of the single authored book and about what happens within the 'academy' 'a traditional, hierarchical, patriarchal context' (Worrell et el., 1999, p167) to those

groups who have ethical and cultural preferences for working more communally and cooperatively. (The 'lone ranger' project of the Ph.D. springs to mind, designed in an era when individuality and authorship were perhaps less hotly contested sites.)

At the same time the cultural stereotypes of 'academic men' described by Trish, for example, were not necessarily being played out by the men in his group. Donald had consistently made life choices that stepped outside any patterns of conventional career trajectories. Andy and Paul echoed some of Trish's own words in expressing their preferences for watching East Enders or playing with their kids, rather than reading the current counselling literature.

There was also an implicit, understated other dimension to the gender politics of this particular workplace. Andy, James and Paul all referred to the pressures of a busy full time "portfolio career" schedule of which the university was part. There was a sense in which the university, and other colleagues, were working to some 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about part-time, flexible working hours that were not appropriate for a group of people who, as Andy said, were only able to offer 'like I can manage 2 to 3'… This tension may not exist exclusively across the gender divide, but in this group it was certainly the younger men who expressed these issues most clearly. Indeed it seemed only to be this group of three younger men, apart from the full-time workers, who understood how systems actually worked and had some more outward looking views about the relationship between research, policy and educational development (see: James, Andy and Paul).

Conditions of Service

The counselling programme at the University of Bristol, like others in the U.K. such as Birmingham, Durham and Manchester, had its origins in the continuing education programmes established as a link between the academy and their local communities. The teaching staff on all these programmes had initially been paid on hourly rates to teach short courses. The award - bearing counselling programmes had mushroomed out of these origins and there were, at the beginning of the 21st century, certificate, diploma and master's programmes burgeoning all around the country. The contracts and conditions of service for staff had not kept up with this trajectory and, at the time this study commenced, there were still only two and a half salaried teaching staff and one and a half full-time administrators supporting the University of Bristol programmes. Resentments about this issue emerged again and again in these conversations. Alexia, Sonya,

Morag, James and Paul, in particular, all took a critical stand in relation to the contractual and administrative infrastructure of the programme.

James, Paul, and Trish were of a mind that research active staff was likely to be those in full-time posts. For the moment, their interest in these issues had to remain 'academic', which is an interesting use of the word.

This critique provides food for organisational thought, but there are no 'thin' or uniform solutions. James, Trish, Dora, Grace, Heather, and Nancy were all clear that whilst they valued the contributions that they made, they did not want a full-time academic post which would be perhaps 'duller' and not allow room for all the other 'richnesses' in their lives.

Future research climates

Plans and ideas for the future formed themselves into what Heather described as *counselling* research or counselling *research*. The former position, exemplified perhaps by Heather, Grace and Dora, strongly emphasised the participative, creative, new paradigm approaches to research, congruent with 'counselling values'. The latter position, taken up by James, Liz and Clare, advocated, by implication, more traditional investigations in the efficacy of counselling as an adjunct to establishing counselling more solidly as a profession.

These are not, of course, either/or positions, as Nancy perceived in her vision of a community of researchers, all discussing their various projects or Lynn and Trish in their speculations about a 'fourth dimension' in counsellor education which would engage the academy in outward looking projects supporting local agencies in their endeavours.

A desire for experimentation and creativity does not preclude being of benefit to society at large or developing a sense of confidence and renown. McLeod (2000a) puts forward a case for the development of more descriptive, interpretive and qualitative counselling outcomes research and comments:

> 'The mindset that prevails within the counselling and psychotherapy world, of equating evaluation with the application of 'measures' may have impeded publication of such studies'. (McLeod, 2000a, p117)

The diversity and divergence of these stories does raise important questions about the starting point and central purposes of research projects and of the need for some pragmatic decision-making about sustainability within a small and currently overstretched workplace community.

Assumptions about what might be regarded as research and therefore what people imagine is publishable, seem to be key issues to arise from these explorations. The Bristol programme seemed to be in the grip of embedded cultural assumptions about 'proper' research and being a researcher. Regardless of their 'take' on the value of proper research, this term was used universally to refer to mostly university-based, traditional research. One emerging and alternative version to this was perhaps available in the contributions from Trish, Heather, Paul and Grace who envisaged ways in which the university could position itself differently as a research facility for local community projects, sentiments echoed by McLeod (1999) who suggested a consultative role. Greenwood and Levin (1998) go further, and suggest that participatory projects with local community agencies would not only democratise research, they would also contribute more meaningfully to a constructive conversation between universities (who claim social relevance) and those engaged in direct social action (1998, p102-3) and challenge the current co-option of the intellectual and other resources of the academy to 'projects of power'. Perhaps participatory research projects might also challenge the culture of indwelling and seeking 'individual solutions to community problems' (Speedy, 2001, p27) that may have unwittingly captured the culture of counselling practice.

Research, practice, writing and privilege

I have reflected elsewhere (Speedy 1998) on my own reluctance to publish my work, in comparison with my desire to place my ideas in the public domain. Indeed, the contents of this thesis have long since been raided in their entirety: most of the illustrations and Chapters Seven and Eight have been adapted as student handouts. Most of Parts Two and Three have been presented as conference papers and workshops (see: Speedy, 1998a, 1999,2000c, 2001b, 2001c). Yet much of it is still not formally published. Perhaps this has something to do with the predominantly 'oral' traditions of counselling and of education. It also seems more than that. Listening to my colleagues' different and complex attempts to define and differentiate between themselves and researchers it seemed that they simultaneously derided and privileged the academy and academic writing. Even Nancy and Paul who embraced the identity of writer (which Lynn, Donald and Liz most emphatically did not) were eager to position this interest outside, or in addition to, the field of academic writing.

There was a strong critique of the academic publishing boom of 'paper after paper after paper' but it is as if the act of writing itself was somehow culturally taboo for all but Nancy, Lynn and Paul.

Perhaps the 'monolithic' style of mainstream psychology (and of much other social science), had really taken its grip. Ideas of academic writing as temporary, transient, experimental texts under constant 'erasure' (see: Ronai 1999, Derrida 1976) whereby:

> 'researchers are tricksters who dance and dawdle with reality by bringing taken-for-granted assumptions into question' (Ronai, ibid, p128)

did not have much currency. There seemed a strong fear of 'tablets of stone' (Speedy, 1998). But it was also more than that.

I sensed in myself, and also others, an attack of either /or-ism and a collapse into what Bird (2000, pp140-200) would describe as 'the unrelenting pull of the binary construction of language in western societies'. This was connected with an almost unspoken (Lynn and Heather both alluded to it) cultural tradition that potency was not possible in both the researching/writing/ publishing and in the 'doing and being' positions, of the practitioner/counsellor/ teacher. I suspected that both I, and my colleagues, subscribed to an unspoken superstition (mentioned, fleetingly by Clarkson, 1998c) that 'renown' as a researcher or writer might lead to a loss of potency and almost certainly a loss of credibility as a practitioner. I am suddenly and uncomfortably aware of being seen, as Heather would have put it as having 'gone over to the other side'. As I write this, I am recalling recent comments from my professional life:

> *"You've gone over to the research conferences now really, haven't you"*

and:

> *"I suppose you don't see any clients these days"* or:

> *"You seem to be writing a lot. I'm surprised you've got the time to have any practice to write about"*.

Opportunities to step into the space in between these constructs (research and practice) and externalise them and their relationship generated a 'language for the in between' (Bird, 2000, p.23) these constructs, new possibilities such as improper research, *counselling* research, therapy as research, research and 'the snow storm' were created, and many positive visions of the future (from: Nancy, Heather, Lynn, Trish, Grace, Dora Paul).

Re-authoring our futures

If I continue with these reflections I will most certainly fall into the trap I said I did not want to, of taking away the individual and accumulated power and impact of the accounts by picking over them like a vulture. I am still heartened by the richness of the accounts my colleagues gave and of their willingness to show themselves and the programme in a range of lights.

I am sure, as always, there is much unsaid and censored and that, as with Ellis (1995, pp 301-341), they were anxious that you would not think too badly of them, their workplace and their relationships. These texts are nonetheless peppered with sparkling moments, defining experiences, awkwardness, superficiality, humour, dis-ease, confusion and intimacy (to name but a few).

I am struck, again, by the many ways in which the telling and re-telling of stories opened up spaces for almost all participants to either express alternative stories or to step into an entirely new position. Heather and Liz both seemed to re-position themselves during these conversations. Lynn, Paul, Trish, Grace and Dora could all acknowledge alternative possibilities that they had yet to embrace fully and Alexia, Morag and Sonya, had all told me problem-saturated stories they needed to tell, alongside emerging and other local stories that were very different. The ways in which these re-tellings and re-authorings manifested themselves varied according to local circumstances.

I was left with the distinct impression that, as a group, in conducting these conversations, we had gone some small way towards confronting and "shifting what counts as knowledge" (White, 1997, p11) within the professional disciplines of therapeutic practice and research. In recounting some of our histories of the present, I could see that we might be able to move forward to generate some different and sustainable future possibilities for ourselves. Our conversations had been transforming and perhaps all the more so in 'accumulated' form. I was also troubled by the impact that the accumulated insularity of the conversations had upon me. This did not strike me as a very positive position from which to enter either a mainstream University department, or the 21st century.

Part Four: The wolf with the human face

The wolf shook itself, stretched out its hind legs, and ran off as fast as it could towards the distant horizon. La Loba stood at the mouth of her cave and watched intently. Her song had taken almost the whole night and the sun was coming up behind the hills. The wolf was speeding away from her and yet, in the early morning greyness, it seemed that the further it ran, the more clearly she could see it. As the creature came to the edge of the forest it stopped dead in its tracks as if it had suddenly remembered something. Just at that moment, as it turned towards her in the half-light, the wolf had a human face. For one split second it seemed as if the wolf woman was looking herself in the eye. And then it was gone.

Unleashed he flies
Illusion, hologram, he and his ghost,
Writing on air, on sand, two thousand years
Of milgi in the gold rings of his eyes

(Gillian Clarke, Lurcher, 1997, p151)

Chapter Thirteen: Opening up space in research conversations and further considerations

Scene One: Inside this author's head:

Which is filled with the detritus from the night before. An old woman in a faded housecoat is listening to a Walkman and sweeping the floor in a desultory fashion. In one corner a large pine table is stacked with computer equipment and papers that are spilling over onto the floor. A cardboard box under the table is stuffed with electrical wiring, audiotapes, computer discs and abandoned electronic gizmos. There are a few chairs scattered haphazardly about, including an old wing-backed armchair piled with books. A slightly sleazy-looking bar, complete with a row of dark red leatherette bar stools and a Formica-topped counter runs along the length of one wall. The barman has clearly not had much sleep. The old woman slings a rubbish sack across her back and leaves without a word. It is only when she shuffles out, leaving the door slightly ajar, that you realise how stale the air is, in this windowless room. The espresso machine has been switched on and is gurgling and hissing at the back of the bar. The barman is occupying himself with the production of various coffees. He places them along the counter at intervals, as if for an invisible group of customers.

One by one a group of rather overweight middle-aged women troops in through the door and sits down at the bar. The scholar, still in her pyjamas and dressing gown makes a bee-line for the caffe latte; the researcher, in a faded grey track suit, plonks herself wearily opposite an Americano and starts heaping in the sugar; the writer, dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, gulps down a double espresso and orders another. The practitioner is wearing loose trousers and a not-quite-matching top. She takes her cappuccino over to the armchair. Consigning the pile of books to the floor, she tucks her legs up underneath her and begins picking the chocolate off the top of her coffee, with a teaspoon.

A few minutes later another woman arrives. She closes the door quietly behind her and drags the last remaining bar stool along to the far end of the bar. She is slightly taller than the rest of the women, and dressed from head to toe in black. The others take no notice of her, but she appears to be watching them intently (After Bochner and Ellis, 1996).

Writer: Traditionally this is where I might place the concluding chapters, but in this case it seems more appropriate to continue with our conversation.

Practitioner: Can I just say that you don't seem to have started the conversation yet? You've described this as conversational research but we haven't witnessed much dialogue. I could read this text as a series of disjointed monologues.

Writer: That is an option.

Practitioner: Well unless you do start talking to each other I'm not sure of the point of all this.

Scholar: We're here now to do exactly that. We've all been working independently on this project, including you, in order to shed as much light on Richardson (1994) and Janesick's (2000) crystal as possible. Now we're going to develop a conversation amongst ourselves. To quote Josselson et al., (1997).

> 'Rather than resolve our differences and present our digested compromises in an expert authorial voice, we make public our process of thinking about our material and thereby explore multiple perspectives on a multi-layered topic' (pxiii).

Researcher: (to the practitioner). You're right. In an ideal world this would have been a co-operative venture bringing together a dialogue between diverse approaches to research and practice. The author has been condemned to isolation by the constraints of the Ph.D. project, so the conversation has been going on inside her head.

Practioner: Well I hope when she finishes this she's going to move on to some better-funded research. She could do with some new furniture.

Researcher: This conversation is a bit contrived isn't it? Aren't we getting a little pretentious here? After all, four separate women who worked from different standpoints wrote 'conversation' as method.(To the writer) Are you writing this down? Is that wise? After all, there are some eminent people within the counselling establishment who would have this author locked away for a very long time for owning up to having this many voices going on in her head simultaneously.

Scholar: Well, Gergen (2001) has produced some very interesting texts of conversations between herself and the other voices inside her head. I think some of what she is saying is quite important. At one point her other voice says:

'By undermining your authority at times, I actually serve a political purpose, at some cost, of course, to your personal pride at being Number One Author'(Gergen, ibid p.90).

Writer: I'm enjoying all this. I couldn't see how I was going to end this text. I'm beginning to find myself quite constituted by what Lather (1997, p41) described as a text as much trying to write her as the other way around. Even though I've created you all, I'm not in control of this material because I've no idea what any of you are going to say.

Scholar: Hang on a minute. I thought we'd established that this was a multi-layered, co-constructed effort? You may have written us into the script as various voices appearing in the text, but I'd argue very strongly with the idea that you created me. After all, I'm the one who wrestled with all the complex ideas. It's only because of my work that we have some understanding of conversation as 'constitutive' of our many selves. I'm the one who ploughed through Bakhtin (1986) and came back with the idea that all research is fundamentally conversation.

'What we have done here is to make this explicit and overt. But we are also in dialogue with readers whom we cannot see or hear. We have yet to discover whether or not this is a valuable way for our readers to learn as well' (Josselson, 1997, p153).

Practitioner: As a matter of fact, I didn't need all your scholarly efforts to come up with these ideas. It was not primarily through book learning, as Trish would say, but through the practice of narrative interviewing that I came to an understanding of conversation as a major site for meaning making and for re-authoring the stories that constitute our lives. Some of the central practices of research in this study, the exploration and identification of habitual, local and emerging stories in our conversations have come from *therapeutic* practices. White (1997) and others have situated these practices within a post-structuralist tradition, but he, in particular, is always very quick to point out that he is not an academic (White, 1993). These ideas emerged from practice, not the other way around.

'While on the subject of ideas, I might say that I do not think that the study of ideas has led me to the invention of specific therapeutic practices …however, I believe that the study of ideas contributes rigour to our thinking, and helps us to

further understand, to explore the limits of, and to extend these practices'.

(White, 1995 p67)

Researcher: Just one moment please. Let's not fly in the face of evidence here and ignore the contribution of research practices. It was the rigorous practice of conventional research that got you all interested in the narrative therapies in the first place. And this has been a 2-way conversation. After all you've been (turning to the practitioner) increasingly using the ideas that Mischler (1986) and Riessman (1993) adapted from Gee (1986/1991) as a form of transcription in the production of therapeutic documents with your clients. You've been doing this in exactly the ways that McLeod & Balamoutsou (1996/2001) suggest, and they are *all* researchers.

It has been the tried and tested practices and traditions of research that have situated this study in some kind of context. You've burbled on throughout this text about counselling as a social process, regimes of truth, cultural constraints and so forth, but I was the one who went out and explored the socio-political and historical context. I was the one who provided all the background information about privileging clinical practice, about widespread confusion and discomfort with and between writing, publication, scholarship and research.

Writer: No-one is denying your contribution, but please don't try and imply that you *proved* anything and you can stop looking at me with that 'voice of god' tone as well. Let's not privilege your part of the story, which was after all, the least competently executed and most distorted side to the crystal. The most powerful, potent and poetic contributions were the narratives that I presented in part three. That's the heart of this body of work. Those fifteen multi-layered, stories… Incomplete, discontinuous, non-linear, but a sparkling contribution.

Other voice: (from the woman in black) I think a little humility might be in order here – and a little less arguing between ourselves. I seem to remember that you started off the methodology chapter with what I thought was a rather cheap swipe at the grounded theorists for arguing in esoteric ways amongst themselves. They were, after all, constrained within their 'moment' within the history of human science research and within their disciplines. McLeod (2001 pp 70-89) would argue that Rennie (1992, 1994a, 1998a,b,c), and I would also suggest Charmaz (1995,

2000), have stretched grounded theory well beyond its limits and opened up the spaces for the conversations we are having today.

I think you all need to stand a little more on the shoulders of those who went before you. You have been co-constructed in order to provide different perspectives and you have been invited here today to explore and consolidate the findings from this *small* study. This is supposed to be a celebration of diversity, not a bar-room brawl.

Nobody's listening to you. The barman's asleep. The practitioner's stopped contributing and has taken out her knitting…and the reader's of this text …… well, currently there are no readers. They all became irritated with this self indulgence some time ago and have turned to the next chapter to see if anything useful is going to come out of this study.

Scholar
Researcher
Writer **Who are you?**
Practitioner

Other: Oh, come on now, you know who I am and I know exactly what you are up to. This is the moment when in any halfway decent Ph.D. thesis, you would be putting your text under some kind of scrutiny. This is the moment to take account of all the limitations and flaws within these endeavours, before legitimately positioning yourselves to list your achievements and proclaim your small contribution to the knowledge base of counselling research, education and practice. All this 'dramatic presentation' doesn't impress me. I think its time to cut to the chase.

Scholar
Researcher
Writer **Who are you?**
Practitioner

Other: Why I'm the other one of course. The 'social ghost' as Gergen (2001) would say. I'm the other voice inside your head. I'm any number of people. I was the ghost of your mother at times in Part One. I am the absent but implicit 'other'. I've been in all your projects, therapy sessions, teaching programmes, and academic and professional texts.

You've not been very explicit about my existence. Alexia, Lynn, Trish and Liz all referred to similar voices inside *their* heads. I'm right here inside your head too and I'm the other person you've been having all these conversations with throughout this so-called conversational study.

Very few researchers actually own up about my existence. They all quote Foucault (1977) these days on shared authorship, just as you did, but nobody likes to admit, apart from Gergen (2001) that they have a 'social ghost' inside their head deconstructing their ideas and yet you all know who I am. I am Bakhtin's (1986) 'super addressee'., the third presence in every dialogue. All this time you lot have been having conversations with the literature of the field, the findings of your survey, the participants in your research conversations, you have also been conducting an illicit dialogue with me. You (turning to point directly at the scholar) came across me recently, as Shotter (1995, p50) said:

> 'It is as if at each moment a third invisible agent, another voice, created by the dialogue or conversation itself, emerges from the background between the dialogue partners'

Well – that's me.

Scholar: Well yes, I came across you in part one, but at that stage my ideas about reflexivity and culture and agency were differently positioned. At the time I placed you as an 'inner' aspect of my 'greater' self. Now I can see that you might have been constructed within these conversations. I suppose you might be a significant contributor to the dialogue within that liminal space between culture and agency. I would like to know more about you, you've arrived a bit late in this text but you might well make an important contribution to my 'concept of agency' (Davies, 1991, 2000b).

Writer: I recognised you immediately, but I've not really given voice to you before.

Practitioner: Well you're Watkins's (1986) invisible guest aren't you? I confer with you all the time in my head and quite explicitly sometimes, as a teacher. I always thought this a little daring. I never imagined that you might be legitimate. What are you doing here now?

Other: Well I thought perhaps you might all appreciate being asked some questions about your work.

2

< A very long pause ensues, during which time, all remaining coffee is consumed. The woman in black watches intently, but the other four all look way, at the ground, or at each other, eventually it is the researcher who speaks…>

Researcher: We might well, but we are only a device created for the purposes of narrating this text. You on the other hand seem to have more agency. I would like to suggest we wrap up this meeting and you continue this conversation with the author – we are all aspects of her after all…

Scene two: Inside the Author's office:

Scene One fades and is replaced by Scene Two. It is late at night and the author is sitting at her computer in the small ground floor office at the front of her house. This room is not unlike the one featured inside her head earlier, except that it is much smaller. The only free floor space is entirely taken up by a large, old, golden retriever, sprawled across the papers. Sadly, there is no bar, barman or coffee making facility in this room, although there is a sprinkling of empty mugs. The author is, needless to say, behind schedule. She had meant to get to this point much earlier in the day but events, as usual, had interrupted her. She was reminded of Russell's (1996) attempts to hide from her family in the cupboard under the stairs in order to write her research papers. This had been a very interrupted day. The crowning glory to the no-dinner-money crisis, the partner with flu, next-door's 'drains' issue and the mystery of the lost swimming costume had been the discovery of an epidemic of nits, just before bedtime.

J.S. Now where was I?

Other: I was just about to ask you about some of the limitations to this study. What's got in the way of this process of discovery?

JS: Well this study spans the period between the first (1994) and second (2000) editions of Denzin and Lincoln's handbook of qualitative research – an era of galloping growth in research and other ideas and practices. It has been difficult at times to hold a position and it has not always been easy to determine which seemingly great ideas were embedded in practices. As a practitioner I find ideas that are dislocated from practices quite hard to appreciate. One of the flaws of this research was that, although I wanted to recount the story of the re-positioning of some of my own ideas and practices, my historical account was written and re-written from wherever my present standpoint was – a history of the present as White (1995, pp41-60) would say.

Conducting this project has also taken me into a different position within the counselling community and from many, although not all, of the participants in the study. I have subsequently

organised and/or presented a series of staff training days on narrative practices together and a series of seminars and conference papers. Nonetheless our relationships with this text have altered as time has gone by. The last two years have been much less participative, as this has turned into 'my' thesis.

Other: You've made a strong case for a pluralist, 'multi-storied' approach. What have been the principal difficulties inherent in those decisions? Have there been limitations to the study?

JS: All research is flawed, and limited. In this study the survey, for example, provided useful background information, but it was very much background to the foreground of the stories. The 'sample' was originally perceived as a nation-wide parallel group to the counsellor – educators at the University of Bristol but it might have been more useful to survey the BACP membership (currently 19,000 people). If I had been more focussed on that aspect of the study, and had had the time and money, this is what I would have done. Removing the question about occupations/disciplines of origin was a design fault. That would have provided very useful information and would have given some indication of the additional strengths in the knowledge base of the counselling field, outside mainstream psychology.

Another weakness of the study is my own writing style. I am not at all sure how far I have come to fulfilling my own criteria (see Table C, chapter four) for the evaluation of 'non-traditional' research. I have fulfilled criteria three and four for myself, in terms of reflexivity, participatory ethics and experience-near contributions. I hope also that it is a sufficiently substantive study, but I found the criteria on 'aesthetic' merit particularly hard to fulfil.

Much of Part Three was, I believe using creative practices and artistically shaped and I think all the conversation here is opening up the text and perhaps even transgressing 'taken for granted' assumptions, but I have found it hard to allow the writing from any of my own voices to flow.

For sound participative purposes I included a lot of transcribed text in Part Three and some readers may have found this repetitive and boring. So, I'm unsure about the 'aesthetic' impact.

Other: Can I ask you then about your substantive contribution? What are the ways you have contributed in this study to an understanding of the counselling field? How might you or others sustain or extend that contribution?

JS: Well, this is a small contribution. It's part of a conversation with other people cited in the text, not only the participants with whom I work, but also the people who have contributed to the research and therapy literatures, with whom I also have conversations in my head. A small contribution can still be substantive I suppose. A range of different aspects of this crystal have been held up to the light and have not simply been observed but have changed and altered in the exploration (Richardson, 1994, p522). My sense is that this study has supported me in discovering where, and in what ways, I would like to make a substantive contribution in the future. I would offer that this study has gone some way towards combining ideas put forward by feminist and post-structuralist researchers with the practices of what have become known as the narrative therapies. I am excited by the opportunity to interrogate the distinctions between research and therapy 're-search' practices (Bird, 2000, Moodley, 2001). Narrative practices may have much to offer people who would like to know more about *how* to go about doing and justifying research within a post-structuralist/feminist tradition. The tentative suggestions I made about silence, pause and moments of the 'unsaid' (Chapter Eight) as the 'markers' of re-authoring need further exploration, as does the use of 'poetic' representation in the production of therapeutic documents.

This study has perhaps generated contributions to that conversation rather than 'findings'.

The deconstruction of the literatures of the research /practice gap 'unpacked' and located the different discourses, cultures and histories of research and practice within North America and the United Kingdom. 'Research' is differently defined and described (in terms of activity and productivity) in North America and the gap situated between research training environments and alienation and non-productivity. 'Research' is also considered an 'activity' in the U.K. but here this construct includes research-mindedness and up-to-dateness. The difference in the definitions and locations of this 'gap' afford different opportunities at both initial training and continuing professional development levels. The North American 'gap' may provide counselling educators in the United Kingdom, with some timely 'health warnings' as we begin to develop more interdisciplinary research training climates of our own.

The metaphor of 'communities of practice' (Wenger 1998) offers opportunities to the counselling community to situate the academy, the agency, the professional organisation, the client, the practitioner, the educator and the researcher (and other stake holders – see Taylor 1997) within a complex web of shifting sites of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) .

This metaphor may prove to be a constructive vehicle for interrogating and 'troubling' the current privileging (and counter-cultural deriding) of both academic and written discourses. It may also prove valuable in challenging the privileging of practice to the detriment of other contributions, which seems so very apparent in the conversations with my colleagues.

A related issue has been the construction of separate researcher, writer and practitioner identities that emerged from both the survey and from my colleagues. It seemed that at least some of the stories my colleagues told themselves about research and researchers included points of entry to preferred stories of research practices as participative, creative, co-authored endeavours. It may also transpire that an increased interest in *literate* means to therapeutic ends (White & Epston, 1989) may re-position writing within the domain of therapeutic practice. In the meantime it would also seem that many of my colleagues (and possibly practitioners and educators in general?) would step more positively into the role of researcher if this did not include writing, which merits further exploration. Some of the most exciting work based on narrative ideas has been emerging from the genre of documentary, anthropological and 'art' cinema (see: Minh-ha, 1991, Smihi, 1987, Mulvey, 1984 for discussions of feminist, political and narrative filmmaking). Counselling and psychotherapy education already makes considerable use of video as a teaching mechanism. In the era of the digital camera, the possibilities for a different relationship between counselling research, education, practice and film making emerges in perhaps ways not yet thought of, or expected.

Universities are privileged stakeholders in the research industry and the participants in this study perceived the agendas and career trajectories of academics with considerable suspicion/derision/awe. Parker (2001) puts forward compelling arguments that concur with this suspicion. In his discussion of the 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1980) which reinforce particular ways of thinking. Parker (2001 p38) argues: 'the discourse of the university operates by accumulating a self-sufficient corpus of knowledge, drawing onto itself other forms of knowledge and making them its own'…

These ideas reinforce Lynn's description of the power relations within the academy, made manifest in the 'arcane' secrets outside her grasp. The metaphor of a community of practice is harder to maintain if, to quote Margaret Atwood (1986) again, 'one language eats all the others'.

Counselling educators, researchers and practitioners choosing to work in the 'Janus Head' environment of the academy may have to develop surprising and unexpected partnerships in order to avoid such a 'hi-jacking' of the discourses of therapy. Indeed, it could, and almost certainly will be argued that the ideas I have put forward here and elsewhere (Speedy et al,2001, in press) concerning narrative practices of research are just such an appropriation of knowledge. I would offer that in extending these practices beyond the realms of the 'purely' therapeutic, I am testing and reinforcing their credibility and integrity.

The counselling programme, a source of 'new knowledge', has transgressed many of the established structures, selection procedures and teaching and assessment traditions at professional education and master's levels. The standard rite of passage or point of entry to academic status is the Ph.D. I notice we have not even considered 'troubling the edges' of the Ph.D. Discourses of academic excellence, scholarship and academic rigour seem to have disabled (Lynn) this suddenly not so 'bright' (Grace) or less 'intellectual' (Liz) group. I wondered whether this degree, originally a training for monastic scholars (Greenwood & Levin, 1998), was a useful training for a present day research work, an essentially cooperative and interdisciplinary activity? I shared Welch's (1999) misgivings about reifying women's different ethical make-up as an essentialist biological trait, but was also interested, if women did seem to currently take up more communal, mutual and less individual moral positions and practices in their lives, whether the Ph.D. , as a project, was as suited to women as it was to men? This needs further investigation.

Certainly the gender politics of the academy bring different agendas from those of the strong female power-base within early counsellor education (see: Johns, 1990, Speedy, 1993, 1998). The concerns of the younger men working full time perhaps 'fit' more easily into the working climate of the University at large although the specific identity implications of men entering a woman's world (Johns, 1990) require further exploration.

As counselling has come of age within the U.K. the gender balance has swerved sharply. Counselling has begun to generate a group of male professors, (currently five: Goldsmiths, Norwich, Strathclyde, Abertay, City University) from within its predominantly female workforce. The additional overlay of a gender divide between the already separate identity claims of researchers and practitioners may well reinforce the concerns or resentments voiced by Nancy,

Lynn, Trish and Clare. I notice that, although a lack of attention to general socio-political context was apparent in both the survey and the 'Bristol' conversations, there was considerable awareness of gender as a 'political' issue.

The survey in part two highlighted the influence of professional accreditation requirements in determining the kinds of work performed by educators. The fact that 90% (+) of this sample were maintaining their practice as counsellors and supervisors, positions counselling and psychotherapy alongside medicine as one of few helping professions to maintain its clinical 'practice' inside a University setting. This caused me to consider the virtues of introducing some explicit forms of research-mindedness into the re-accreditation of counselling educators as well as within initial counsellor training. At the University of Bristol, in particular, it seems vital and urgent that we develop a larger, more research-minded lecturing staff without losing this 'leading edge' of grounding within our own practice, and with some sense of counselling as a 'social process'(McLeod, 1999a).

A local description, rather than contribution, has been the fragility of working contracts and commitments between the University and the counselling programme staff (which contrasts sharply with the enthusiasm and interest the participants had for their work). The survey highlighted that many counselling educators are working in a range of practice and training settings including universities. Given concerns and suspicions about academic aspirations and purposes voiced above, the maintenance of such diversity may be very useful. The strongly voiced critique of Nancy, Morag, Alexia, Sonya, Paul and James, however, would suggest that the infrastructure supporting this programme is insufficient and required at the very least more core staffing. The insularity and inward looking nature of much of the commentary in Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven also led me to question the virtues of employing exclusively counselling practitioners within a university professional education programme and to consider collaborating with other university staff from within education, psychology, sociology and literary studies (for instance) as a means of challenging the 'reification' of practice that seems to have developed within the accredited trainings. This privileging of practice no doubt acts as a counter-balance to the glorification of 'research' that takes place within the academy. It does seem, however, that research *and* practice *and* education *and* attention to personal and professional development might all contribute to our future programmes.

The relationship between counselling practice and the universities does need careful consideration. The domination of the literature promoting and encouraging research-mindedness amongst practitioners by primarily academic rather than other contributors is indicative of the caution required (Wheeler & McLeod, 1994, Speedy and Etherington, 1999, Rowland & Goss, 2000, Mcleod, 1994, 1999, 2001). The development of a research climate within counselling in the U.K. will need to be part of a two-way conversation. The kinds of research partnership with agencies suggested by Trish and Liz whereby academic researchers describe themselves as a consultative service to local agencies and communities, might begin to open this conversation (see Mellor Clark & Shapiro, 1995, McLeod, 1999). Counselling researchers have so far had very little success in obtaining funding from the large research councils (the first Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded project with counselling in its title, started in January 2001, see: Bondi, 2001). It may be that small-scale partnerships with local agencies would not only prove more fruitful in this respect, but would also:

'be the overall challenge to democratise research, making the external stakeholders an integral part of the knowledge-generation and evaluation processes' (Greenwood and Levin, 1998, p103).

This might also go some way to challenging notions of insularity and the de-contextualised sense of self that was so evident in the research conversations.

I don't know if those findings are 'substantive'. they have challenged my own sense of purpose more than anything else within this study. I found it remarkable that so few participants in the conversations were aware of their surroundings. Almost no-one had noticed that they were already working in research centre of 'international renown'. As Liz pointed out, (somewhat counter-culturally) it *is* a research culture. By way of contrast, within the same university as the counselling programme, the School of Social Policy has research centres 'concerned with the social forces that impact on families and children at an individual, local and national level' and others exploring 'democracy and participation; poverty and inequality; crime and justice; social order and social harm; and citizenship and asylum' (SPS, 2001), and within the Graduate School of Education (which counselling has joined) there is an infrastructure of research centres, wherein 'a broad, 'socio-cultural' approach has been adopted, and this enables us to relate work of sociologists, psychologists and many others in inter-disciplinary and multi-level ways. (Culture

and Learning in organisations , see: CLIO, 2001). The counselling programme staff offer a strong critique of university cultures, but they seem to do so partly without exploring what is outside *their own back door*. The University research centres outlined above, do not seem to have been designed by remote, erstwhile human beings, who are 'in their heads' all of the time (but of course this might be the case).

Counselling educators are clearly extremely adept at telling and valuing their personal stories and no doubt those of their clients (see; Alexia, Morag, Nancy, Liz, Sonya, Grace). They have much to offer human science research, or the art of re-searching with humans, about 'particular' personal ways of knowing:

Certainly to live
In a world of personal vision
Is to live in a very different world
from the world of conventional appearances
Or the world of economic struggle
Or of psychiatric disease

The personal vision encompasses
The struggle of all humanity
The personal vision concerns
How each of us stands
In relation to our life
(Mair, 1989, p133)

They seem 'culturally' unaware of the location of these stories and visions within local, professional, cultural and socio-political processes. The constitutive nature of 'the struggle of all humanity' vis-a-vis the personal vision seems to remain culturally unavailable. This is a chillingly accurate reflection of House's (2001) observations:

'therapy can, I suggest, routinely construct a regime of truth which self fulfillingly creates a framework which serves to guarantee its own legitimacy, and outside the confines of which it is often exceedingly difficult for clients or therapists to think....(p127) '

And perhaps this holds true for not just individual therapy sessions but for the entire culture of the professional problems industry?

These findings go some way to explaining why I found the 'culturally constitutive' ideas and practices of the narrative therapies so refreshing, since these ways of working offered a *'practice'* that celebrates culture and agency, rather than a *theory* of contextualised therapy.

I have found the cumulative affect of the stories in part three, rich in personal, local meaning and knowledges, an enormous challenge to my own sense of values and purposes in the work that I do.

It has never occurred to me with quite so much force before that the professional culture of counselling might, by default and lack of critique, not actually stand alongside people in their social context in the pursuit of social justice. These counsellors lives, richly described in Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven are testimony to the transforming power of narratives and to the significance of the telling and re-telling of stories. They give an account of 'externalising conversations' as a 'radical way of relating' embracing not only a feeling for people, but a 'feeling for words', that leads to 'talk that sings' (Bird, 2000, 7-34). These accounts also make available points of entry to gaps and cracks within the professional expertise and culture of counselling and perhaps provide this author at least, with opportunities to explore some alternative stories.

These issues seem vitally important to the future of counselling and have concerned me a great deal throughout the course of this project…

…Well, perhaps, I should stop here in terms of the high ground of 'substantive' contributions, although this study did also raise all sorts of questions for me.

Other: Well you seem to have fulfilled your own criteria then, in terms of a 'substantive contribution' I'd be really interested to hear more about those questions, and of any sides of the crystal, half-glimpsed.

JS: Well, I'm less certain about the criteria. I find the 'transgressive/ emancipatory obligations quite daunting. I was excited, seduced even by Lather's (1995) transgressive validity and notions of 'rhizomatic' and voluptuous validity. Perhaps the conversation in Scene One of this play might constitute 'leaky runaway practice'. I am not sure this study 'unsettles from within' or 'taps underground' (Ibid, pp56-55). I do think that this text represents a wholehearted attempt to 'give up mastery but keep reaching for fidelity' (Harraway, quoted in: Stockton1992). I think the telling and re-telling of stories in part three is an example of a large group of people equally willing to engage in that process. I am also curious about the efficacy of conducting this research amongst a group of people living in the shadow of the academy. I had my own agendas, which I have been transparent about, in that:

> 'I had in mind an engagement with my participants such that within their conversations certain changes might occur in their views'. (Gergen, 2001, 91)

I now wonder, partly following James's more 'corporate' take on the term 'research', whether people in a range of other agencies and organisations might have more pragmatic pro-active assumptions.

I think the rather enigmatic presence of the wolf woman has been an interesting part of this text, not transgressive or emancipatory perhaps, but certainly liberating for me. The wolf woman has been standing alongside more traditional processes of the production of 'research' texts and in her own way has entered the conversation with Shotter (1992) who commented.

'For all we know such texts are nothing if not the medium par excellence of fiction, of storytelling' (p157).

I have also found her incredible focus and relentless pursuit of her bones rather daunting. If anything, I feel intimidated by her and sure that she finds me wanting in many respects. At the end of this project I find that I have looked at this particular wolf from a range of perspectives and much of it has come alive, has generated life if you like. I feel clearer now about the craft of bone collection and of my own possible future contributions to that craft. I remain unwedded to the pursuit of any particular animal and fairly certain the wolf woman finds this fickle and somewhat lightweight.

I have questions about another area. These are not questions entirely raised by this study but questions that were generated anew listening to the participant's description of their futures. These were concerns that the establishment of standards, central tenets and accredited programmes in counsellor training might have occurred in a way that has led to a lack of critical thinking or of engagement with new ideas. These questions are not new of course and have been posed by Feltham (1996, 1997) who was promptly rapped across the knuckles for challenging the established consensus (Wheeler, 1998, p138) of 'consistent parenting that provides a containing environment'. Mine are no more than tentative speculations, but I'd be interested in exploring these issues further. I suspect that 'research mindedness' will only become tenable as an aspect of the professional education of counsellors, if and when we have shifted 'the axis from received wisdom and conceptual imperialism…to live, urgent owned and shared analysis of the human condition' (Feltham, 1997p124, after Goldfried , et al., (1992) and Bohm, 1994).

Other: Well, this has been an interesting conversation, I feel as though I've acquired quite a life on this paper, but I'm also aware that this endeavour is becoming more and more complicated.

There have been several different 'styles' contained within this study and several different conversations. Not only those between yourself and participants, but, latterly, conversations played out within your head. I'm not entirely satisfied. How do we find the substantial point of view in such an array, how will I know what I should take away and consider for the future?

JS: Well, what I am hoping is that I have resisted the reification of any 'one way' to do this work (Josselson, 1999, pxiii) and provided multiple possibilities for future consideration. My own future considerations have mostly been expressed already in this conversation. I am left with some very 'local' concerns about:

- Increasing the numbers of staff on more substantial contracts at the university.
- Considering ways of developing a research climate that allows for, and encourages a range of styles of participation from staff and students. I am thinking specifically here of the tradition of 'research weeks' within the timetable of the Graduate School of Education and of finding ways of including a counselling 'research week' across the programmes.
- Using the information gathered in this study to inform the counselling group as they now take on the task of establishing a counselling research centre.
- Using some of the ideas, explanations and practices that have been generated within this project to inform us in the development of a more creative, participative doctoral programme.

I also have less tangible concerns about:

- Developing ways of representing research in the counselling arena that 'by-pass' the written word, such as performance, documentary film making, and the development of multi-media/hypertext documents.
- Finding ways of entering a conversation about research-mindedness and critical thinking in the education of counsellors, and particularly the professional education programmes at the University of Bristol.
- Finding ways of challenging the decontextualised, insular perspective that takes scant account of social processes and makes no attempt to influence social policies that that may be part of the culture of counsellor education.
- Finding ways of encouraging more masters' students to publish their findings, perhaps by introducing writing courses as an M.Sc. follow-up option.

- Finding a group of people, perhaps not only from the counselling field in the U.K. who are interested in participative explorations into narrative practices in therapy and in research.

Other: And what about the unfinished conversation in your head between the researcher, scholar writer and practitioner? Was that just a device?

JS: It was much more than that, as is my conversation with you. It was my attempt within the confines of a Ph.D., to engage in 'a relational method of scholarship' (Lieblich, 1997, pp138-148) and to engage in an externalising conversation in a way, with these 'identities' that seem so loaded with meanings for the counselling profession and counselling educators in particular. I had the idea that if I positioned myself in these guises, I might come to some greater understanding of their tactics, habits and desires and even, perhaps, to out fox them a little (Morgan, 2000, Epston & White, 1992)

Other: And how far did you succeed in this undercover detective work?

JS: Well, Not that well really. I've started a conversation that I hope will continue, and with you as well...I think you might have some uses in narrative therapy. It was surprising how much of the text was written by the researcher, even though other voices were available. Much of this text is standard academic 'copy'. So I found it hard to maintain all the positions, which is interesting in itself, really. I also think that I've opened some space to continue to interrogate these positions and to question those who so vehemently hold one position or the other. I look forward to continuing to disrupt these either/or isms. I would like to see counselling courses opening their doors to trainee human science researchers who want to learn how to construct conversations and I would like to see trainee counsellors attending more creative writing courses. Then perhaps, we can have a dialogue. The counselling profession has been busy for the last twenty years establishing its credentials, but now it might be time to blur a few carefully drawn boundaries. I, and many colleagues in the counselling and psychotherapy field within the U.K., (McLeod, 1997, Payne, 2000, Etherington, 2000, Bond 2001, Parker, 2001) already share or borrow many of our ideas from literary theory, post-structuralism and feminism. It would be interesting to explore in the future the ways in which our practices and purposes come together and where they part. If counselling in Britain is really going to develop as an interdisciplinary profession, informed differently from its North American antecedents then perhaps some of the ways forward would be to develop links outside as well as within, our professional domain.

Epilogue.

Although the survey and interviews that formed the basis of this study took place only a short time ago, as ever in organisational studies, events did not wait for us. I did not, however, allow the fact that this thesis had not yet been submitted to prevent me from influencing events. During the last three years the counselling programme has gradually become part of the Graduate School of Education, under the auspices of which, a research Centre has been established in Counselling and Learning that has a stated bias towards 'innovative narrative research' (CCL, 2001). Many of the ideas and practices developed in this study have been part of both the establishment and ongoing work of that centre, including local and international projects on the relationship between narrative practices in therapy and research (CCL, ibid).

A proposal for a taught doctoral programme in narrative and life story research is currently (October 2001) proceeding through the University of Bristol committee structure. This programme includes units on narrative ideas and practices in therapeutic and research conversations, narrative and life story research, autobiographical and auto-ethnographic research and creative writing for research purposes (Speedy, 2001d), all of which have been influenced in their design by the work carried out for this study. A parallel development has been the establishment of education and training in narrative therapy practices within the master's programme in counselling (M.Sc., 2001). Aspects of these two programmes are interchangeable which, it is hoped, will further blur the genres of narrative research and therapy practices.

If I were to initiate these conversations again today, very different stories would be constructed. Several staff have left, but those remaining would express different accounts of themselves and of their relationship to the world of research and researchers. I imagine that they would speak enthusiastically about the research climate in the Graduate School Of Education and the research Centre in Counselling and Learning in particular. The teaching and learning programme in counselling has expanded and is continuing to do so, yet the working conditions of almost everybody who took part in this project remain the same.

In the wider world, events have also overtaken this study. The advent of the British Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy Research (see: Mcleod, 2001a), is a creative initiative, supported by myself and my colleagues, Tim Bond and Kim Etherington, that affords many opportunities for practitioners and researchers alike to develop different ways of writing about and therefore of envisaging the work they do. It is too early to say where this will lead.

In the wider, wider world the narrative turn is truly upon us. My painstaking steps to establish a logic of justification for the development of narrative ideas and practices in my work (see: Part 0ne of this study) seems almost quaint in the light of the ways in which constructs of 'conversation' as constitutive of and 'story' as performative of meaning have become everyday. The completion of a doctoral thesis is a strange endeavour at the calmest of times. In this case, I have been 'fiddling' with my bibliography while New York has quite literally been burning. It has been heartening, and poignant on almost every count to hear Jeanette Winterson (2001) suggesting that the way forward might be a re-authored conversation:

'When the twin towers collapsed they collapsed a fantasy. We had told ourselves a story about safety, about certainty, about prosperity, about the future. It was a good story, and now it's gone. Part of our psychic pain is that we don't have a story at all - only fragments and guesses. Humans need a narrative. Our best chance is another story - made from the rubble of what has been lost. This time we have to tell it better' (p9).

Once upon a time....

Once upon a time, a long time ago, and also at this very moment, a woman lived alone in her cave. She was slightly apart from, but known by her community, sometimes reviled, sometimes revered. Indeed, everybody knows about her, although few have ever seen her. She exists, in one form or another in the folk stories and mythologies of many cultures. She is known in Mexico as 'La Loba', *the wolf-woman*.

This wolf woman's purpose in life is to be the collector, curator and recorder of the bones and debris discarded, ignored or unknown to the community around her. Some of her collection seems very precious, some of it quite bizarre. It may not be immediately obvious, even to her, why she has collected some of the bones she has in her cave. She, nonetheless, goes on obsessively hoarding, collating and storing all manner of material.

'The sole work of La Loba is the collecting of bones. She is known especially to collect and preserve that which is in danger of being lost to the world. Her cave is filled with the bones of all manner of desert creatures: the deer, the rattlesnake, and the crow. But her speciality is said to be wolves' (Clarissa Pinkola Estes 1992, p2).

Word count: 82, 203.

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Appendix One

Questionnaire to integrative/humanistic course tutors

Please tick the appropriate box:

Age:
20-30
31-40
41-50
51-60
61-70
71-80
80-100

Sex:

male
female
Ethnic origin:
(self definition)_____

Do you define yourself as:
(tick as many as seem appropriate)

- a course director
- a core tutor
- a supervision group facilitator
- a skills group facilitator
- a personal development/ awareness group facilitator
- other (please specify)

Please circle yes or no as appropriate:

1) Do you also define yourself as an active counsellor? (counsellor and psychotherapist being synonymous in this study) **yes/no**
If **yes**, state approximate regular client caseload:…….

2) Do you also define yourself as an active counselling supervisor? **yes/no**
If **yes,** state approximate regular supervisee caseload:……..

If **no**, to questions 1) or 2) can you say why? Is this through :
(tick as many as seem appropriate)

- lack of time

- Lack of opportunity
- Lack of inclination
- other (please specify)

3) Do you also define yourself as an active professional in the wider world of counselling.(e.g. BAC/ASC, etc.) **yes/no.**

If yes, can you briefly say more about that:

4) Do you also define yourself as an active writer in the counselling field? **yes/ no.**
If yes, can you briefly say more about that.

If **no** to questions 3) or 4) can you say why? Is this through :
(tick as many as seem appropriate)

- lack of time
- Lack of opportunity
- Lack of inclination
- other (please specify)

Any additional brief comments that you would like to make on your roles as counsellor/ supervisor/ active professional/ writer and their contribution to your teaching:

5) Do you also define yourself as an active researcher in the counselling field? **Yes/ no.**

If **yes,** is this as:

(tick as many as seem appropriate)

- An individual
- Part of a team
- Both
- other (please specify)

Any additional brief comments that you would like to make on your role(s) as a researcher and their contribution to your teaching:

6) If **no**, to question 5) can you say why? Is this through :

(tick as many as seem appropriate)

- lack of time
- Lack of opportunity
- Lack of inclination
- Lack of funding
- other (please specify)

7) Can you please specify your working environment as a counselling educator/ trainer? Do you work in:

(tick as many as seem appropriate)

- a university
- a college of further/ higher education
- an adult education institute
- an independent counselling organisation / training institute
- other (please specify)

Any additional brief comments that you would like to make on your teaching context:

Any additional brief comments that you would like to make about this survey, generally?

Thank you very much indeed for your co-operation in this project. If you would like to be informed about its progress and outcomes please include a name and contact address:
Name:
Contact address:

e-mail:

If you have any concerns or difficulties about filling in the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below:
Jane speedy,
Staff tutor in Counselling Skills,
Department of Continuing education,
8-10 Berkeley Square,
BRISTOL.
BS8 IHH.
Tel: 0117 9445134
e-mail: jane.speedy@bris.ac.uk

Please return your questionnaire in the envelope provided by December 30th, 1997. Thankyou.

Appendix 2: The British Context.

I conducted a survey of educators working on the 39 professional counsellor-training courses described in the BAC directory (1997) as person-centred/humanistic or integrative courses. I sent out 206 questionnaires (5 to each other course and 16 to the University of Bristol staff) in October 1997 and had received 82 replies by the end of March 1998. By the end of June 1998, I had received 120 replies. Most of these last 38 replies arrived in a flurry subsequent to, and in some ways in response to, the paper entitled 'exploring counsellor educator and trainer attitudes to research and the 'research practice gap' (Speedy, 1998) that I gave at the BAC research conference in May 1998. I was grateful for this continued support and interest but it was clear that many of the replies were coloured by the presentation and ensuing conversations that took place at that conference. I therefore used only the first 82 replies to inform my findings. These included the 16 replies from the University of Bristol.

Limits and hazards

I should perhaps first outline some of the limitations peculiar to this particular aspect of the study and of the power of representing data in graphical form. The cultural dominance of categoric or numerical evidence as 'proof' or 'truth' or 'scientific fact' is a daily occurrence for those of us living in advanced capitalist and western societies (Sapsford & Abbott, 1996). This kind of 'technological' knowledge has traditionally subjugated other more local knowledges (Sarup, 1993, pp58-87).

The juxtaposition of words and images in graphical texts is very powerful. The feminist filmmaker, Trinh Minh-ha (1999), notes that 'an image is powerful not necessarily because of anything it offers the viewer, but because of everything it apparently also takes away from the viewer' (p.xi) Graphical information is often incomplete or misleading without the accompanying text, which in itself offers an incomplete representation of findings (Slife & Williams, 1995). Thus, representative images produced to display survey findings together with the texts written to explain them are as distorted, or refracted, in their illuminations as those from other aspects of the 'crystal' made up of the research conversations within this study. The 'intervals' or gaps or spaces between the images and accompanying texts trouble the edges of the 'voice of god' style that often accompanies the reporting of survey findings in research studies. These intervals invite the

discerning reader to question the ways findings have been categorised and to seek out the many other images and texts that are hidden beneath the ones that have been chosen.

I have conducted a survey by questionnaire in order to find out what I wanted to know and then to say what I wanted to say (Sapsford, 1999, pp12-48). I have not produced a complex version of such an undertaking and have shed only partial light on my findings in order to contextualise the conversations in part three that comprise the privileged data in this study. This contribution is incomplete and distorted, not by intention or by design but by the partial nature of any research undertaking, however well conceived.

Not all the people who undertook to complete the questionnaire that I sent them were using the same conceptual systems as I was, even though I have undertaken to transparently eradicate or highlight ambiguities where they occur. There are many formulaic ways of attempting to eradicate 'error' in survey results, often based on the incomplete and misguided notion that 'mathematics is a form of transcendental reason' (Lakoff, 1990, p9). It is easy to make assumptions about my colleagues in Britain and miss subtle distinctions in meaning or to make my own assumptions that their ways of answering a survey in November 1997 had some overarching meaning that was not due to, for example, the weather conditions in Strathclyde or the impact of the survey envelope arriving on the doormat on the same day as their decree nisi.

This survey might illicit completely different results if it were to be conducted a second time. It is, however, *probable* that had it been conducted again within the same time space and cultural context, very similar stories would emerge. Our certainties are shored up by the inexact art, or science of probabilities. This might be troubling if descriptions of greater depth and accuracy are what we require. If, however, we are seeking to describe more thickly the phenomena under scrutiny then glimpses, however fleeting, of attitudes and ideas from across the country add dimensions to the text. The 'domain of validity' that constructs 'replicable' and 'quantifiable' findings such as these has not been invalidated by, for example, post structuralism or narrative understandings. Nor, I would argue, are such 'categoric' or 'measurement' stories inappropriate aspects of a narrative inquiry, they are, rather, subject to:

> 'limits associated with instability and chaos. Once we include these concepts, we come to a new formulation of the laws of nature, one that is no longer built on

certitudes, as is the case for deterministic laws, but rather on *possibilities* (Prigogine, 1997, p29)'.

There is a distinct probability that out of the kaleidoscopic possibilities that might have emerged from asking questions about research and practice, I have highlighted a particular story via the questions that I have asked that has led to a collective thickening of that story in particular ways. These constructs are more routinely used to describe the telling of oral or written stories and of the construction of multi-storied texts, as in part three of this study (see: Bruner, 1990, McLeod, 1997, Crossley, 2000) but could equally describe graphical representations of people's stories, 'measured' glimpses of stories, statistical stories and surveys as slices of 'collective biography', (see Lieblich, et al, 1998, Davies, 2000).

I did not expect the 'evidence' that I obtained to be any more 'valid' than the other research conversations in this study, nor do I wish to write this section in any way from the 'voice of god' position, which would imply such a greater validity. Writing up empirical survey research in a partial and reflexive way is, however, a complex path to follow since the striving for as much impartiality as possible is part of the logic of justification inherent within the endeavour. I can only state transparently my understanding of partiality and acknowledge that to 'infer' from statistics is as much a political act as to infer from stories and conversations that use words and the design of this aspect of the study was limited by the 'back ground' position it has been placed in, in comparison with the stories in part three, and also by my own technical abilities and limitations. From the outset the answer to the question 'what do I wish to be able to say?' was limited by the ways in which I felt competent to say it (Tracey & Gidden-Tracey, 1999).

Nonetheless, I have included these survey results as an appendix to my study my study for two reasons. Firstly out of a desire to contextualise the conversations represented in Parts One and Three and thus challenge any notions of isolation outside cultural contexts and social processes. Secondly, to challenge ideas that poststructuralist or feminist or narrative researchers should reject these kinds of statistical and graphical stories and ways of representing human experience. Indeed, it could be argued that 'the point is not to accommodate or reconcile distinct paradigms but to recognise each as unique, historically situated forms of insight' (Tolman & Szalacha, 1999, pp 9-10) that co-exist and that ' a real advantage in this option is the possibility of a methodological

dialogue - an ongoing dialectically informative interaction at each point of the research' (ibid, p11).

An incomplete picture fraught with power relations.

First of all it is worth reiterating the power of the 'normative gaze' in the collection of this data. As Sapsford (1999) points out:

> ' The activity we undertake is located in a society organised in terms of power relations, as are all societies, and that our thoughts and actions may have consequences, for ourselves and others...' (p162).

There are several overt ways in which these power relations, quite apart from my own power to formulate questions, may have impacted on the findings from this survey. Firstly the contact name that survey sheets were sent to was often the name of the course director in the institution concerned and on several occasions it was clear that the sheets had also been collected up by one person and sent back together, rather than in the individual stamped addressed envelopes provided. In these cases people would be aware that their course director and possibly line manager had access to their reply. It may be that some of the replies were skewed to include whatever people felt their manager would like them to write. Similarly 34 course providers out of the possible 38 returned one or more reply, and several returned as many as four or five, but there were an unusually large number of replies (16) from the University of Bristol. This is partly explained because Bristol is an exceptionally large provider and is the only institution in the country to include three discrete BACP recognised diplomas in its programme. My own colleagues were also followed up more diligently and they were all encouraged to return their questionnaires. Indeed, they may also have skewed their replies to include whatever they felt I would like them to write. The survey results are, therefore, skewed towards Bristol, giving my colleagues and myself a stronger voice.

I targeted person centred /humanistic/integrative courses because this was the most substantial group and because this was the description given to the Bristol group of courses. There is no way of extrapolating from this sample as a percentage of the population of educators in Britain since this group may be very different from those with different theoretical perspectives. Indeed, it has been implied contemporary person-centred counsellors have a distinct ambivalence to 'research'

that (Goss & Rowland, 2000, McLeod, 2001c) in which case this survey is giving voice to a group who hold specific positions vis-à-vis research activities.

Tempting as it is, working in a university, to hand over the 'number crunching' to a more statistically competent colleague, I decided to limit the survey to the simple descriptive statistics and tentative comparisons that I was capable of producing myself and that I knew that I and my less numerate colleagues from the counselling world would understand. I have not even used a computerised statistics package, but rather a calculator and word processor on the grounds that these facilities are available in any counselling agency, and that I could use my findings to illustrate teaching points without intimidating the M.Sc. students who did not have access to, or were not going to attend additional courses on statistics programmes for social scientists (see: Hicks & Wheeler, 1994 for a similar rationale). The mathematical and statistical limitations inherent in this decision immediately give this aspect of the study a less powerful voice and may confirm speculation that pluralistic studies inevitably privilege particular epistemologies and methodologies (Bryman, 1992). There is some justification for this speculation since the more complex, inferential and interpretive and the less descriptive any aspect of this study becomes, the further it enters into the epistemological realms of the search for 'truth' and begins to privilege ideas of single rather than multi-storied texts.

Descriptive and comparative information: health warnings and design faults

It is important to state from the outset that the findings from my survey produce some interesting information about the whole sample, of 82 counsellor educators. This seems a useful contextualising element to the conversations with my colleagues from Bristol. I have gone on to separate out different groupings within the sample, but the comparisons that emerge from this process are exploratory, inconclusive and not in any way statistically robust. I believe that the inclusion of these findings is wholly appropriate in an inconclusive and exploratory study from an exploratory and inconclusive worldview, but would stress that is important to extrapolate only questions and speculations rather than any conclusions from these comparisons. Dar, et al. (1994) would not agree with the inclusion of these representations and would argue that they should be disregarded as statistically insignificant. I want to be clear that I am making no claims for robustness, but I am including these findings as an inconclusive backdrop to the Bristol stories and

as an invitation to future researchers (possibly myself) to conduct further or repeated and wider investigations into these concerns.

I have, for instance, compared findings for men and women and for universities and other institutions and for the University of Bristol and other institutions. All of these are interesting, but flawed comparisons, the first because the survey was of those engaged in initial professional counselling training, this did not always include the people who had fulltime contracts as 'academic' staff, since they were often teaching at masters and doctoral levels only. Only one of the three professors who fitted the description 'person-centred /humanistic' completed the survey, for example. He was the only one who was working with the diploma (initial training) staff group in his institution. It is possible, therefore, that there are more academically confident men in the group that did not complete the survey. In the second group there were people who worked both at universities and at other institutions so these are not entirely discrete groups as they might be in other professions. Indeed, some of those working at the University of Bristol were also working at other institutions, but the significant factor about this third grouping is the size of the sample. The whole sample comprised 16 people, a far from robust figure from which to extrapolate statistics, so although I have displayed the figures for Bristol as percentages alongside the other charts it is important not to lose sight of the fact that 6% of the staff at the university of Bristol programme represents one person, not a statistically significant trend.

In all these cases the differentials between male and female educators across categories (figs G and H) and between educators in university and other settings and between the University of Bristol and other settings (figs D, E and F) were not statistically significant. Nonetheless this information led to some useful and interesting conversations with my colleagues along the lines of: 'if this were to have been significant in any way, why do you think that might have been?' which, particularly in the case of the data for the University of Bristol and the data concerning issues of gender, led to some interesting ideas and discussions.

Critics of this survey have argued that I should have given clear definitions of the meanings of researcher and writer in particular and that in not offering clear definitions I perpetuated the ambiguity with ambiguous survey results and that I did not specifically invite respondents to offer their own definitions of research, although many volunteered them (Johns, 1998c). I accept that it would have improved the design of the survey, and the richness of the data gathered, if I had asked

for definitions of 'research' and perhaps also of 'practice' from all respondents (43 out of 82 offered definitions). I did not want, however, to offer any prescriptive definitions or make any assumptions about definitions of research or scholarship, as this very area was the complex, hotly contested ground that I was interested in opening up, rather than closing down. I wanted to expand the repertoire of ambiguous and inconclusive possibilities in which to embed individual stories rather than close down the conversation.

I constructed a survey questionnaire (see: Appendix One) that collected demographic information about age, gender and ethnic groupings, information that was descriptive of workplace locations and workplace identities and of the activities engaged in other than as an educator (counsellor supervisor, writer, researcher). The survey consisted of seven closed questions with forced choice (yes/ no) responses, some allowing for additional information and some demanding additional checklist responses from the same stem (see: Fink & Kosecoff, 1998, pp1-36). There were a further three optional open questions inviting comments on the impact of practitioner and researcher identities on educator roles and inviting feedback on the design of the survey.

I conducted a pilot study, sending out questionnaires to other colleagues who did not consider themselves humanistic or 'integrative' in their approach (three 'psychodynamic' and three transactional analysis 'TA'), I deduced that the survey might be considered a bit too long, and therefore removed two questions about previous careers and qualifications. I later regretted this decision, as so much of my subsequent argument came to rest on the interdisciplinary nature of the counselling profession, and I only collated this information in any detail about my colleagues in Bristol. The most positive responses were to the bright yellow paper the questionnaire was printed on and the stamped addressed envelopes I had enclosed. Both the paper, "beaming out at us, from amongst the incoming mail like a fleet of German ambulances" and the use of 'real' first class stamps, induced considerable guilt to good effect.

What did I expect to find?

I had imagined that I would discover that clinical activities by counsellor educators were diminishing as they took on more of a research brief, particularly in universities. I also envisaged that attitudes to research would be more positive amongst men and that these would be younger men with psychology degrees and university career trajectories in their sights. I expected that

university staff would be more aware of research and more actively involved in it than their counterparts in other training institutions. I was curious about how people viewed scholarship, writing and research and how these ways of working were constructed. I did not offer definitions of these activities, but was interested to see how people responded to a series of interconnected questions about such endeavours.

Findings: Demographic, professional and workplace identities

Percentages may not seem the most useful way to present data from a sample of only 82, but I have done so in order to make some tentative pro rata comparisons with the 'embedded' groups of university staff and University of Bristol staff. Of the 82 participants in the survey, 95% defined themselves as white Europeans, the remaining five percent comprising one Asian, two non-European Jews and one North American. The majority were in the 41-50 age group (32 people) closely followed by the 51-60 age group (28 people). In the 31-40 age group there were 16 people and, perhaps surprisingly, given the 'second career' traditions of counselling as a whole, there were 4 people under 30 years of age. The pie charts (Figs I, J and K) show clearly that the majority of these educators were women, although this figure falls slightly for university educators and somewhat curiously rises for the University of Bristol. The group working at the University of Bristol was only 16 people and this difference could have been a chance occurrence, but the figures are included here as some interesting speculative discussions ensued with some of those 16 people as to why that might have been the case.

Turning to fig A, it appears that well over half these educators and trainers (59%) are working at least part of the time in universities, which is probably indicative of a growing trend away from agencies and independent organisations into higher education institutions (see: Connor, 1994, Dryden, et al, 1995, Johns, 1996, Berry and Woolfe, 1997). The next biggest group (41%) worked in institutes of higher or further education, leaving 32% in independent agencies and counselling training organisations and 6% in adult education institutes. There was considerable overlap between these groups with the majority of respondents (57 people) ticking more than one box.

According to fig B, the survey respondents included a small group of 22% who only worked as group facilitators, but the majority were either core tutors (57%) or course directors (46%). Thus, one might assume that the vast majority of survey respondents had considerable responsibility for

teaching, and even for curriculum design and innovation. Respondents were not specifically asked if they had responsibility for teaching research methods courses or for supervising research projects, but nonetheless 41% (34 people) volunteered, in answer to the optional inquiry 'are there any additional brief comments that you would like to make on your role(s) as a researcher and their contribution to your teaching?' that they had these tasks as part of their responsibilities.

One fulltime university lecturer commented:

> *' conducting my own research projects, however costly in terms of time and energy, has reaped dividends in terms of updating and constantly questioning the way I teach research methods'. Another part-time core tutor from a further education college noticed, 'I am much better at supporting the students and supervising their projects since I carried out my own master's degree research.'*

As can be seen from fig. C. virtually all the participants were active practitioners (95%) and supervisors (90%) and a substantial majority (71%) were also active professionals in the wider world of counselling, including active involvement with professional organisations. In answer to supplementary questions it emerged that the majority of these respondents (76%) spent a day a week or more engaged in the practitioner roles of counsellor or supervisor.

By way of contrast, much smaller numbers (59%) defined themselves as active in the fields of research and writing. This is, unsurprisingly, a considerably higher figure than those put forward in the previous chapter for practitioners, but perhaps it is more interesting to note that 41% were not engaged in these activities and the 59% who were had very complex, ambiguous and seemingly contradictory understandings of what was involved in research, writing and scholarship.

Those who answered the optional question: ' any additional brief comments that you would like to make on these roles and their contribution to your teaching', fairly uniformly answered that the former were professional requirements and givens and the latter were valuable or (in some cases) luxurious options.

Fig A

N = 82 Graph showing employment contexts

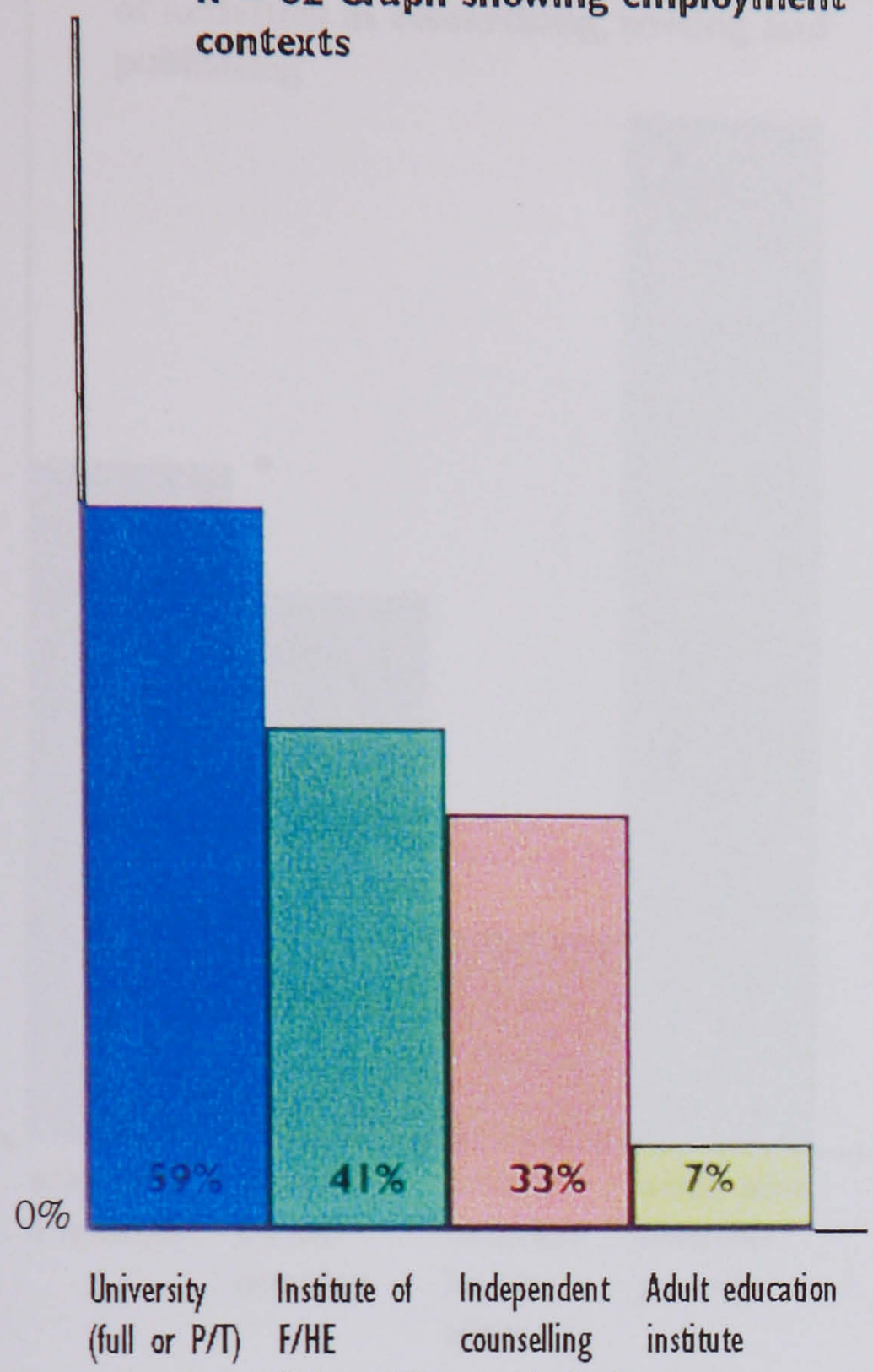


Fig B

Sample of 82 person-centred / humanistic trainers and educators in Britain. Graph showing areas of current responsiblity.

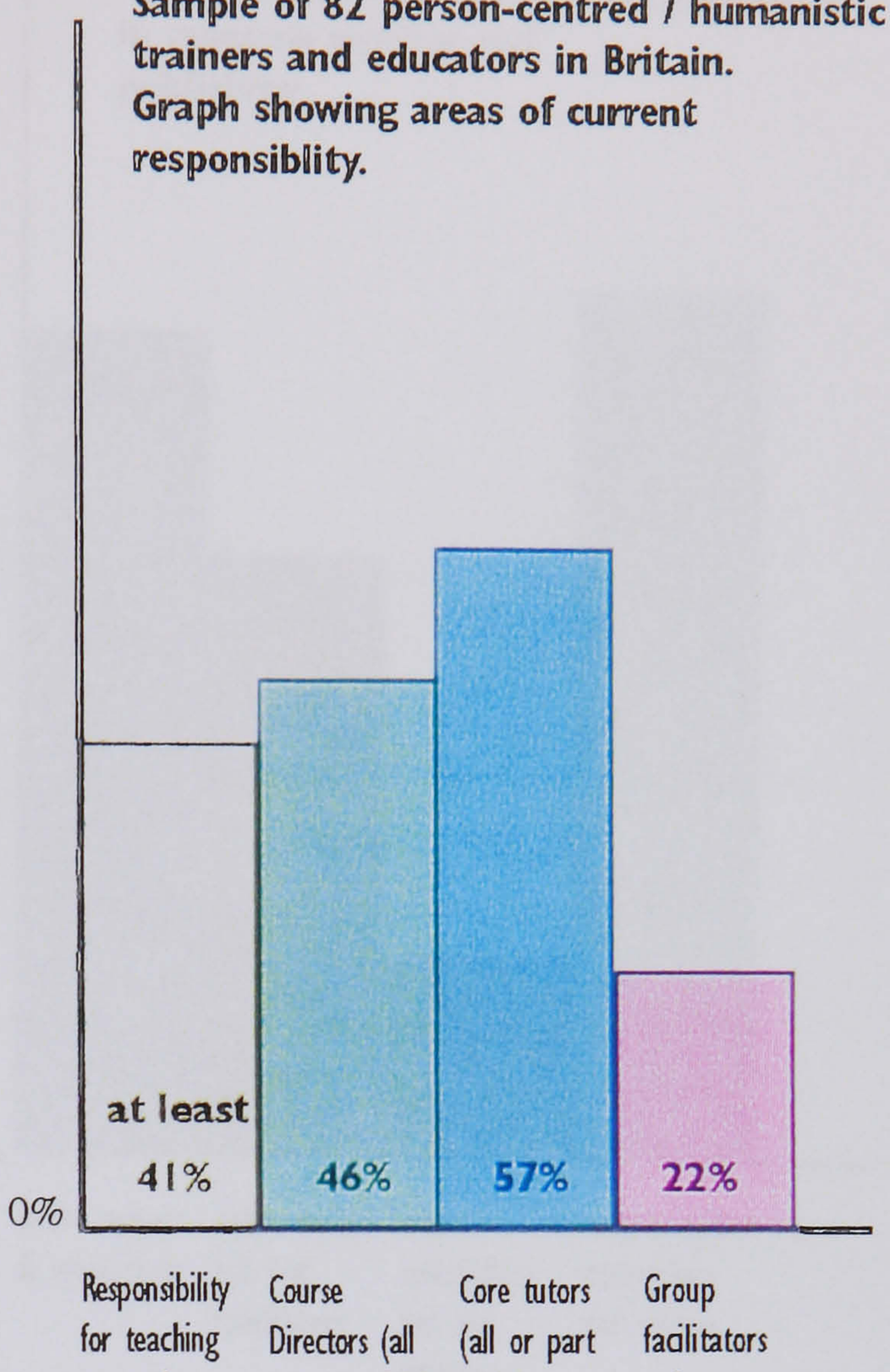


Fig C

Sample of 82 person-centred / humanistic trainers and educators in Britain. Graph showing areas of current activity.

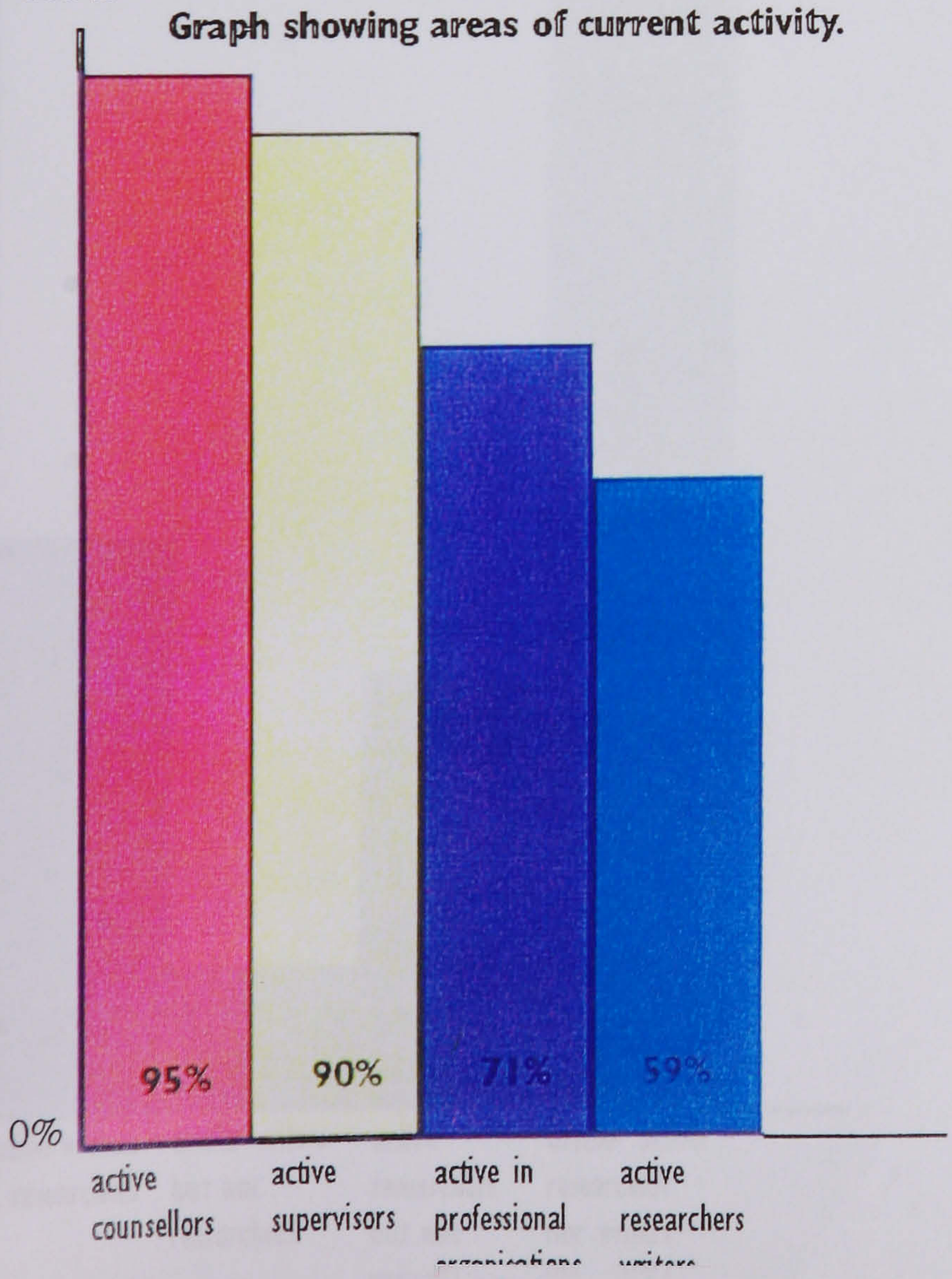
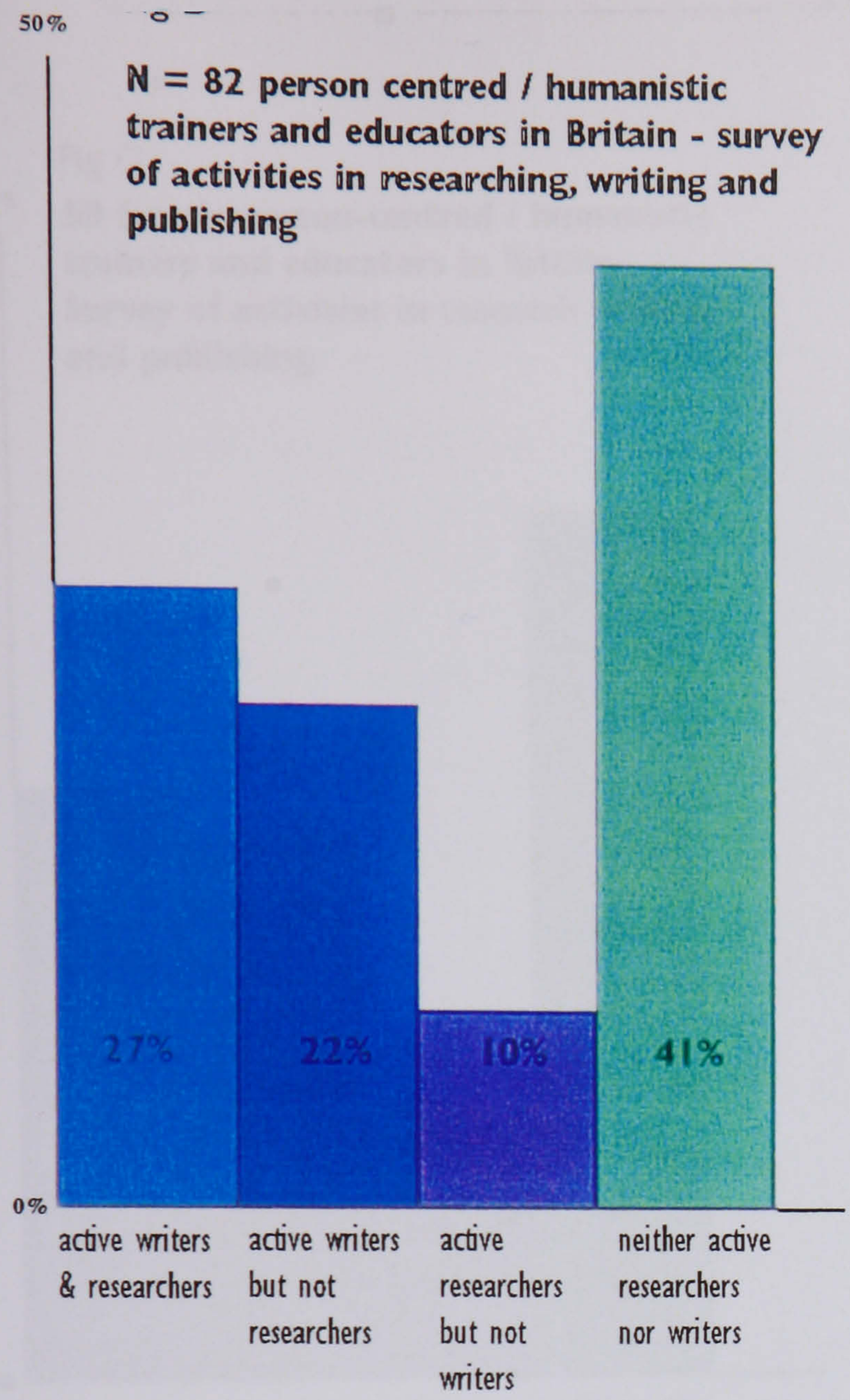
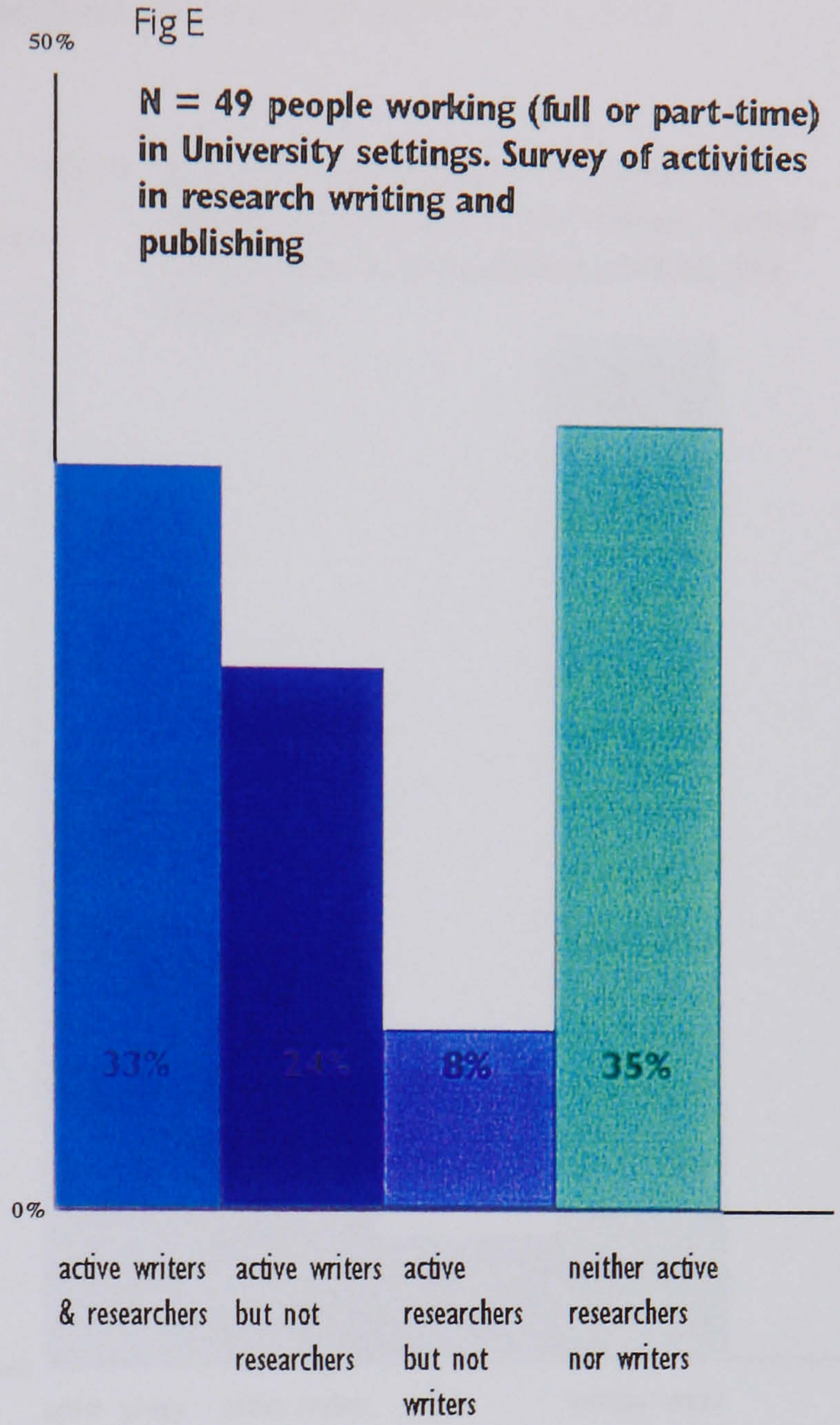


Fig E

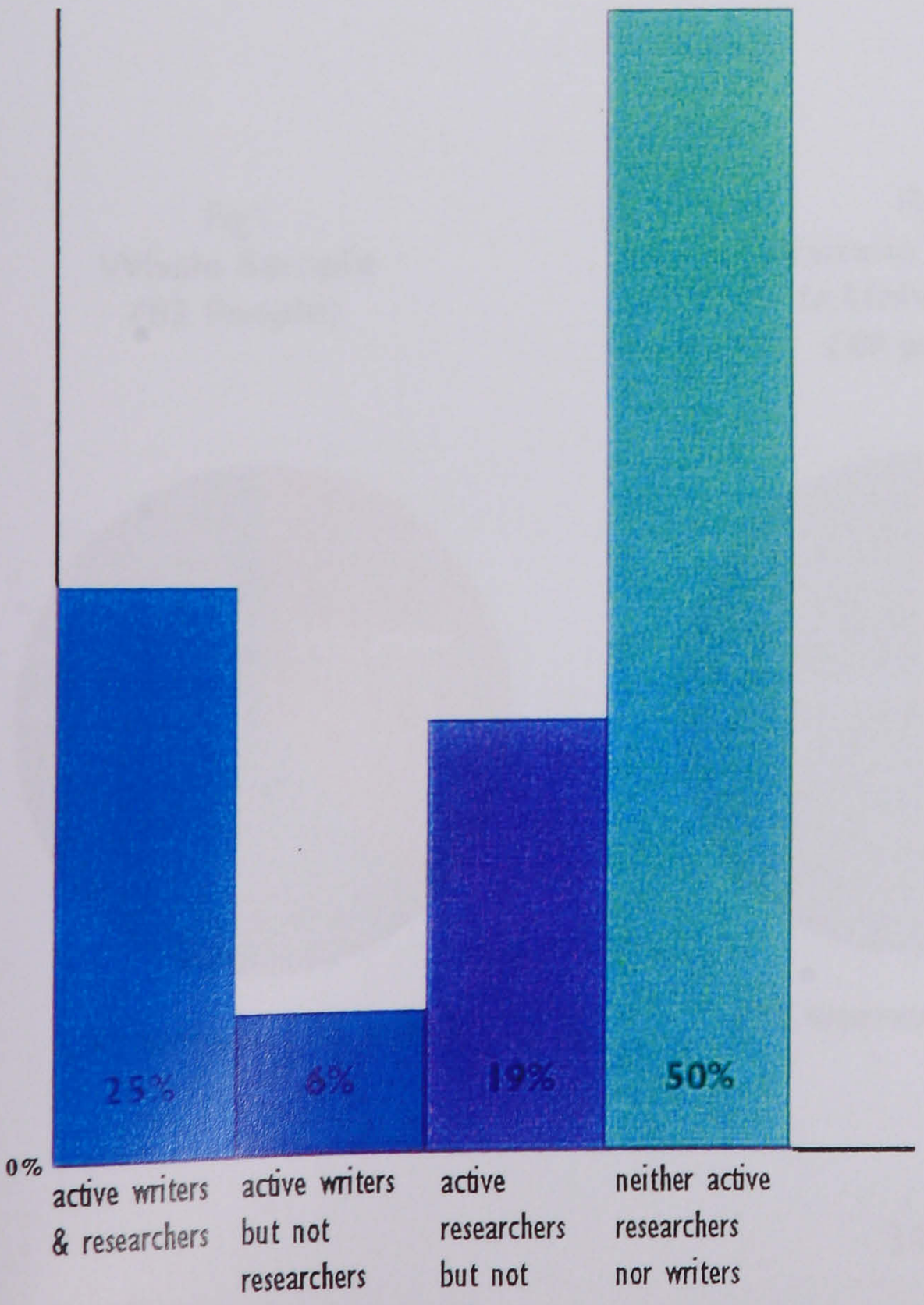


N = 82 person centred / humanistic trainers and educators in Britain - survey of activities in researching, writing and publishing



N = 49 people working (full or part-time) in University settings. Survey of activities in research writing and publishing

Fig F



N = 16 people working (full or part-time) at the University of Bristol. Survey of activities in researching writing and publishing.

Fig G

50 female person-centred / humanistic trainers and educators in Britain. Survey of activities in research writing and publishing.

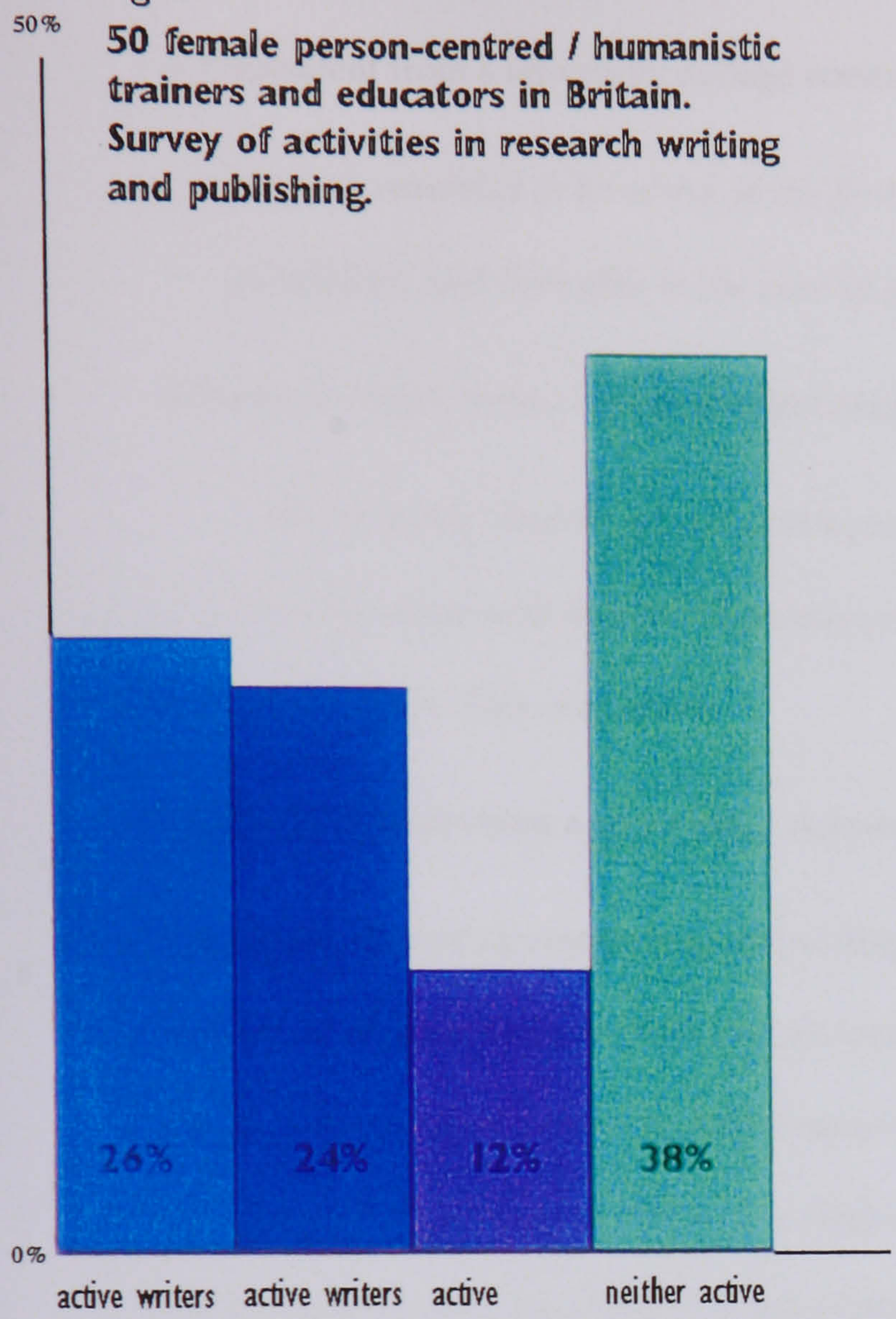


Fig H

32 male person centred / humanistic trainers and educators in Britain. Survey of activities in researching writing and publishing.

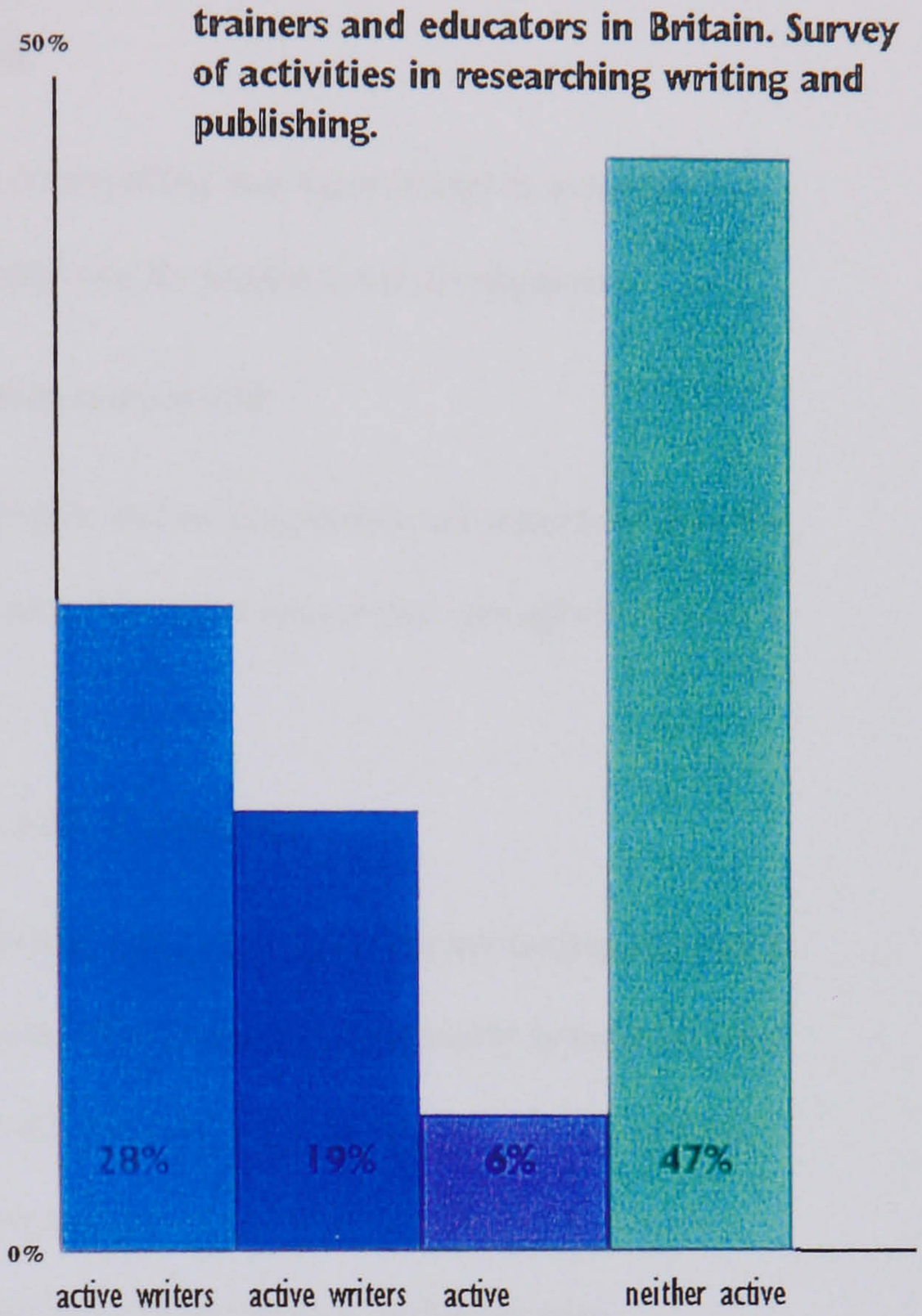
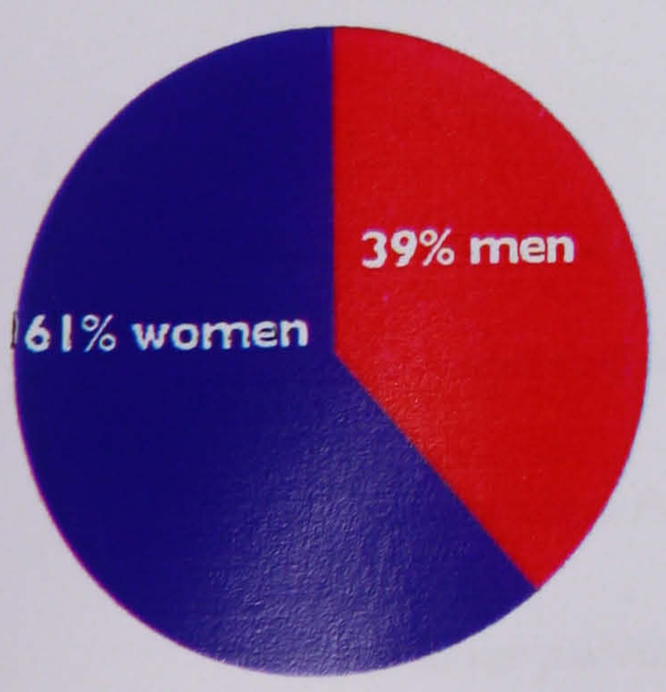


Fig I

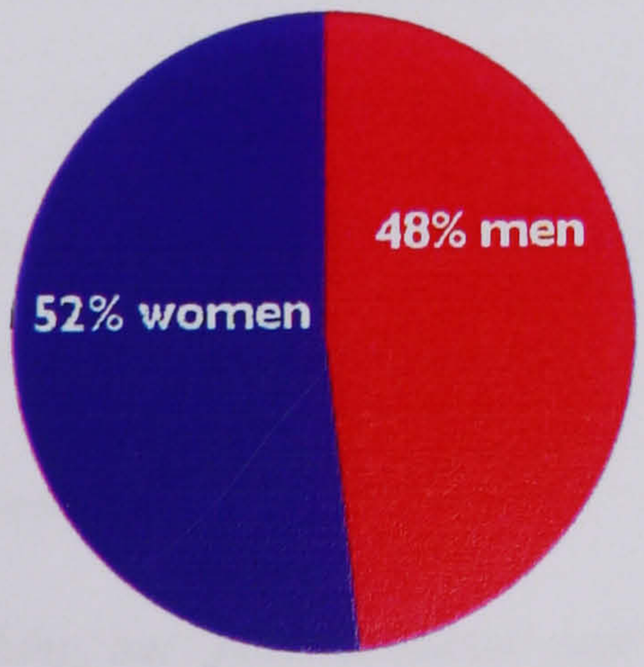
Whole Sample (82 People)



(50 women / 32 men)

Fig J

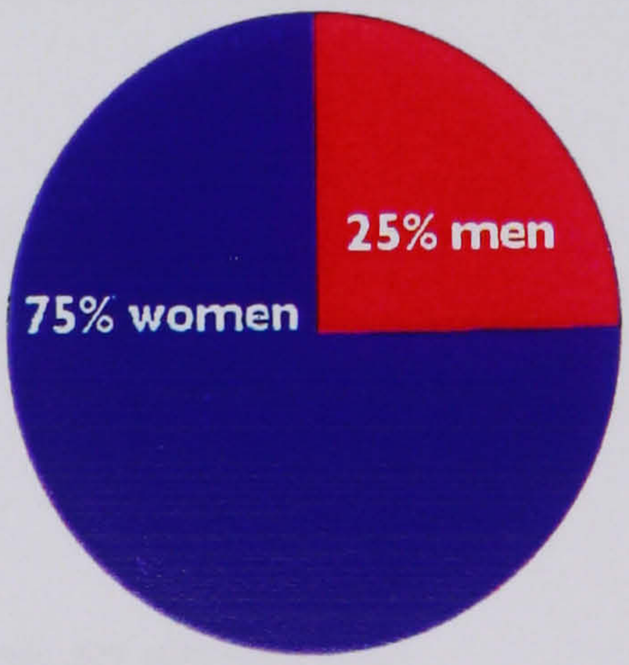
Sample Working in Universities (49 people)



(25 women / 24 men)

Fig K

Sample Working in the University of Bristol (16 people)



A respondent from a university college commented:

> *'It feels essential to be active in the first two (counselling and supervision) to maintain credibility, and desirable in the case of the latter two for professional development.'*

Whereas a trainer from a an independent organisation commented:

> *' it is a 'given' that we are all active practitioners and we get paid for all aspects of this, but it is only those with fulltime university posts, or independent means that can afford the time to sit and write. This is a luxury.'*

Findings: Researching and writing: A complex web of meanings

The charts illustrating researching and writing activities indicate a slight, but not hugely significant increase in these activities within the university sector (figs D and E). Particularly interesting were the distinctions made within the whole sample (N=82) between researching and writing, writing and 'researching without writing'. One might at first imagine some truly exciting post-modern research genres emerging from the counselling field, such as an upsurge in documentary filmmaking or performance art. This is not the case. It is interesting to note that 10% of the respondents (8 people) were researchers who did not write (fig. D). This might be seen as a survey design fault or a chance happening, except that most of these people added optional additional comments explaining something of their meaning. One respondent was actively engaged in a research team in a university setting and commented:

> *' I hate writing up and leave that to others in the team who enjoy it. My contribution as a counsellor is to use my face-to face skills as an interviewer. I think counsellors have much to offer in this arena. I know my colleagues value my input.'*

Three others, however, saw 'research' as connected with the acquisition of qualifications and not as a process connected with publication or the public domain:

> *'I am putting in a Ph.D. proposal',*
>
> *'I have never published anything, but I have conducted small studies for my diploma and M.A.'.*

' I don't see myself as a writer, but I am conducting a research study as part of my masters degree'.

Whereas another group of three, rather in the spirit of Kvale 1999, McGuire, 1999 and Moodley, 2001, (see: p 94) regarded their clinical work as their research:

'my practice is my research, it is this research that informs my teaching, keeps me questioning, alive and alert to new ideas'. 'I research all the time. My three days a week in clinical practice are the researching and this is the base that I teach from'. 'I suppose we need to write more about what we do, but there's never enough time, so doing it and teaching it get priority, and that's what I get paid for. I suppose if I wrote about my practice, you might call it research. So then I might be a 'name', but poorer!'

Differentiating between the 27% (22 people) who defined themselves as researchers and writers (fig, D) and the 22% (18 people) who saw themselves only as writers and did not claim a 'researcher' identity was extremely difficult. These two groups seem interchangeable in terms of qualifications and quantity and style of publications produced; yet they defined themselves differently.

The first group (researchers) had produced, collectively, 33 books, 11 chapters in books and 'innumerable articles and papers'. The second group had produced 19 books, several chapters and at least 37 articles or papers 'several' in refereed journals. One member of the second group had written 3 books and 25 articles, 'several' in refereed journals, but did not define himself as a 'researcher'. Both groups included at least one Ph.D. and at least 2 Ph.D.'s "in progress".

It was quite hard to discover how these meanings were constructed and is perhaps unwise to extrapolate too much meaning from a fairly superficial survey. I hope more will emerge from my in-depth study of colleagues at Bristol. Nevertheless, it was interesting to note that frequent reference was made to "proper", "real" or "bona fide" research, as if this was somehow different, or other, than the research that counsellor educators might be engaged in. Perhaps those who 'only wrote' were part of an improper grouping? Several respondents were positive about research that 'enhanced both teaching and clinical practice' and referred to 'the positive impact of new paradigm research' and 'the qualitative research that skilled counsellors can contribute much to'.

A course director from one university, however, having extolled the virtues of 'new paradigm methodologies' also commented:

> *"I am not, of course, a researcher in the proper sense of the word".*

Certainly, looking again at fig. D, a high proportion of the 41% (34 people) who defined themselves neither as researchers nor writers lacked the 'inclination' to do research (19 people). Of the other 15, 13 lacked the time and funding, but, glancing back to fig A, this seems equally true of the 59% (48 people) who defined themselves as active researchers and/or writers, 12 of whom lacked the time and funding.

Findings: Gender and professional confidence

The majority of participants were women, although this was less so in universities in general and more so at the university of Bristol in particular. The differences between the genders were not marked, with a slightly greater incidence of male participants seeing themselves as neither writers nor researchers. This may have been 'happenstance', it may have been the result of surveying initial professional training courses only, as outlined above, or it may have been connected to the identity claims that men who enter the 'feminised' domain of counselling and psychotherapy construct for themselves (Johns, 1988, Speedy, 1998).

Turning to figs G and H, a greater percentage of the men 47% (or 15 people) as opposed to 38% (or 19 people) of the women, considered themselves neither active researchers nor writers. 22 of these people, (18 of whom were men), regardless of gender, had elaborated on this response by adding that they lacked confidence in themselves as researchers and writers. Furthermore, 16 of these men described their experience as unique, individual, peculiar, or particular to themselves.

'I have a real block about writing, this is nothing to do with the questions you are asking and everything to do with me'.

' I have not resolved the issue of my reluctance to publish and enter the public domain, this is a purely personal issue'.

' I lack the courage to do this kind of work, I don't know why, I shy away from it at every opportunity 'I personally have got a real 'thing' about writing'.

The published written word is a very privileged genre in our society and the reluctance to engage in this domain is therefore noteworthy. The speculation that this is a purely personal, individual issue may have its roots in the reluctance of those in the therapeutic domain, (including those who have a social constructivist awareness of the subjugated knowledges of their clients) to see themselves as embedded in a cultural or social process. It may have its roots in the oral rather than written traditions of therapy. It may be linked to the kinds of 'non privileged' identities and attitudes to power relationships that many men who enter the counselling professions seek for themselves, or, entering the arena later on in the history of counselling than women, they may not yet have shifted from this position (see: Johns, 1990). This would be an interesting arena for further investigation.

About the survey

Participants were generally very positive about receiving this survey and comments suggested that they had some sense of the rationale behind the questions and the timeliness of its arrival.

Two university staff (from outside Bristol) commented:

> *'I am really glad you are doing this, somebody needs to... the very fact of the questionnaire had some of us reconsidering our position'.*
>
> *' This is just the tip of the iceberg of course... I think these issues are becoming more and more critical'.*

It is, of course, a relatively small world and one of the reasons for such a good response from course directors was that many recognised my name or even knew me quite well. Responses like:

'nice to hear your voice, if only on yellow paper'.

'thought I'd better answer this, just in case you retaliated in your external examiner's report!'

were light hearted in tenor, but also indicative of the 'small world' in which we were moving.

Although the 'dual relationships' were more glaringly obvious in my researching my colleagues from Bristol, it would be quite hard to find a corner of counsellor education, particularly in the university sector, where I did not have some level of current or previous connection.

There was also a minority of quite vehement hostility to the project. One or two anonymous questionnaires and one from the university sector (quote (a) below) had fairly strongly worded responses to the optional question: 'any additional brief comments that you would like to make

about this survey generally?' These seem worth including for their surprising strength of feeling and considering that their authors then also bothered to return them in the s.a.e. provided.

(a) *'I cannot see the point of this at all.'*

(b) *' God alone knows what is going on in universities these days that you have time for this kind of nonsense'*

(c) *'bloody waste of time'*

(d) *'pile of crap'*

It is difficult to know what inspired these comments. My assumption has been that they referred to the nature of the project rather than the specific design of the survey, which was by and large well received, but I have no way of knowing this as no forwarding addresses were left.

Discussion and further questions

It is clear that I did not find much of what I expected. Clinical work had not substantially reduced as the counselling profession began researching itself, nor had the research that existed been dominated by younger men with psychology degrees. If anything, male researchers were less in evidence than women, and many of the male participants exhibited a lack of academic confidence. This may have been connected with targeting the initial professional training sector, but this is still the largest sector of any counselling education programme. The BACP accreditation guidelines and guidelines for ethical practice have had a major impact on counsellor educators who have clearly retained the clinical/practitioner role that has now been discarded by other helping professionals outside the medical profession, such as social workers and teachers who enter the domain of university education. The requirement to engage with practice, but not research, was mirrored in the initial counsellor-training curriculum:

'At present, professional counsellor training courses do not have to require students to carry out a piece of research, nor indeed do they have to provide students with training to help them become informed consumers of the research literature in counselling. However, this may change in the near future' (Dryden, Horton & Mearns, 1995, p23).

Nonetheless, to integrate and maintain counselling research, as part of the busy and demanding lives of counselling educators and trainers who are not appointed to clinical posts within the university sector is perhaps a daunting prospect. Perhaps a research-practice gap or at least researcher/practitioner differentiation, if not inevitable, is to some extent desirable in order to make people's working lives tenable. A university-based professor of counselling, one of the few respondents to my survey who felt he had successfully integrated clinical and educational practice and research commented:

> *"I see the integration of all this as highly desirable, but very demanding"... "I doubt if many could keep up the schedule I pursue for long - the cost could be high".*

Certainly both those engaged in research and those that were not, felt constrained by lack of time and funding (as well as lack of 'inclination' for 19 of the 'non-researcher' contingent). All these issues seemed interesting sites for further investigation.

The world of research did not seem to be dominated by younger male psychology graduates, which is interesting considering the mainstream male psychologist's domination of the North American counselling research literature. Might we be able to do this differently in the U.K., or were we just at an earlier stage in our professional and therefore 'engendered' development?

Research activity was dominated rather by women in the 40-60 age range (discipline of origin, sadly unknown, a survey design fault). None of the 26% (13) of women who saw themselves as writers and researchers were under forty, whereas of those 38% (19) who lacked the inclination to do research five were under forty and seven cited their young children as a reason for this. None of the men in this survey mentioned their children.

Further questions about the University of Bristol

The entire Bristol 'sample' comprised only 16 people, including myself. I nonetheless made the comparisons displayed in figs D, E and F. These comparisons are of no statistical merit, but the discussions that they provoked amongst the counselling programme management group from Bristol (Myself, Lynn, Heather, Trish and Liz) were extremely interesting. When confronted with the idea that we seemed to be substantially less engaged with research than our equivalents and peers in other university settings, this group readily came up with the explanations that we had been much more engaged with building a teaching programme first and had not 'had anything to

research' up until this point, that we had built up one of the largest course programmes in the country within a continuing education (course provision) environment and that research had received neither funding nor enthusiasm. Another factor, according to Lynn, was that she was the pioneer of the programme and had herself had little interest in research issues, which she had not promoted. This group also speculated that the higher number of people describing themselves as researchers but not writers was to do with the contract that we had negotiated as a group within the department to have our clinical practice regarded as the equivalent to the research output of our colleagues. The larger number of women at the University of Bristol in comparison with the smaller number within the university sector as a whole was considered due to the strong female management team. It is impossible to know whether these issues would have been regarded differently by other university management teams, I can only record that these were the perceptions of the Bristol group, whom I shall go on to describe in some detail in Appendix Three.

Appendix 3: The Bristol Context.

The survey of initial counsellor training outlined in the previous chapter went some way to contextualise the group of colleagues in Bristol that I interviewed as the main part of this study. I also collected a considerable amount of additional demographic information about that group. We comprised (and I included information about myself) twelve women and four men, evenly divided between the 30s/40s and 50s/60s age ranges. Three of us had full time salaried posts at the University of Bristol although Liz's work was not all within the counselling programme. Three others had substantial part time posts and the remaining ten were freelance practitioners employed on a sessional basis (figs L, M and N). In total there were 40 such freelance practitioners employed by the University on the large programme of short courses, certificate courses and master's programmes in counselling, but the focus of this study was the group of sixteen people concerned with the postgraduate diploma, our initial professional training and education. These were, in the order that I later interviewed them, Alexia, Nancy, Morag, Heather, Lynn, Trish, Sonya, Dora, Grace, Andy, James, Liz, Paul, Clare, Donald and myself.

These sixteen people were the only group about whom I had information with regard to their initial education and career choices. Of those who did not have a first degree but either went straight into the workforce, into vocational training, or failed to complete their degrees, two became teachers, one a nurse, one an occupational therapist, one a Methodist minister, one a community worker and one an airline crew member: interdisciplinary indeed. Of those who completed first degrees, one had a degree in psychology and one in English and psychology, but the other contributing disciplines were history and politics, drama, biological sciences, anatomy, philosophy, sociology, librarianship and art. This certainly bears out John McLeod's (2001a) assertion that fewer than 20% of British practitioners would have a degree in psychology. Less than 10% of counsellor educators involved in the postgraduate training at the university of Bristol possessed a psychology degree.

Fig L **Gender**

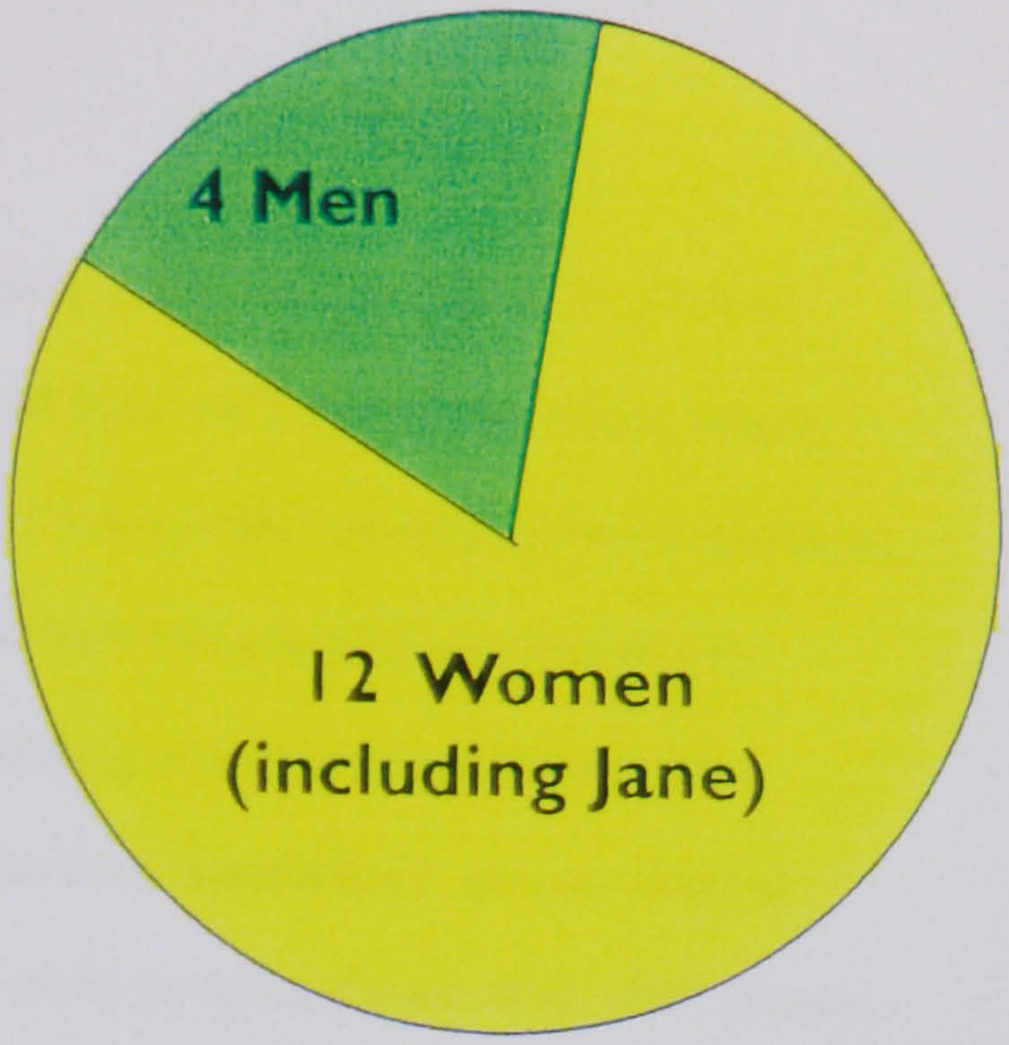


Fig M **Age**

Morag
Sonya
Andy
James
Liz
Paul
Clare
(Jane)

Alexia
Nancy
Heather
Lynn
Trish
Dora
Grace
Donald

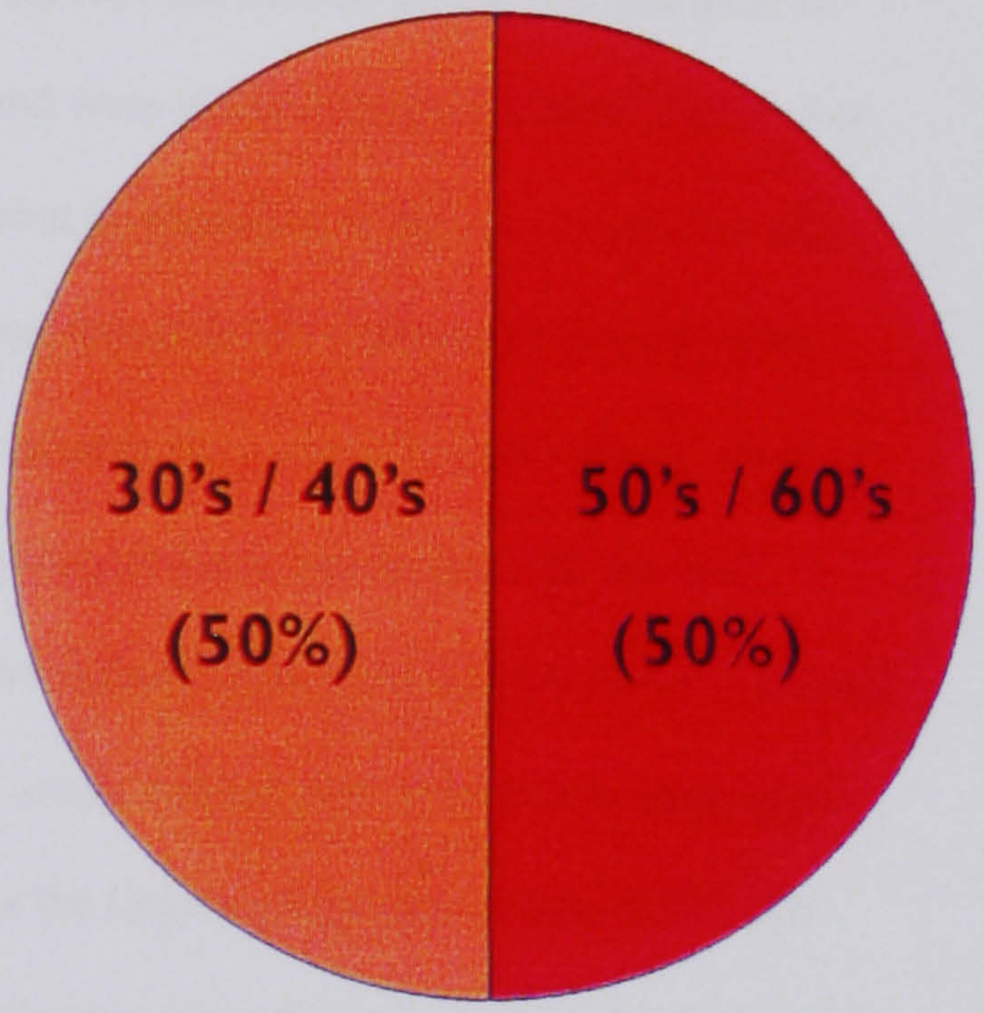
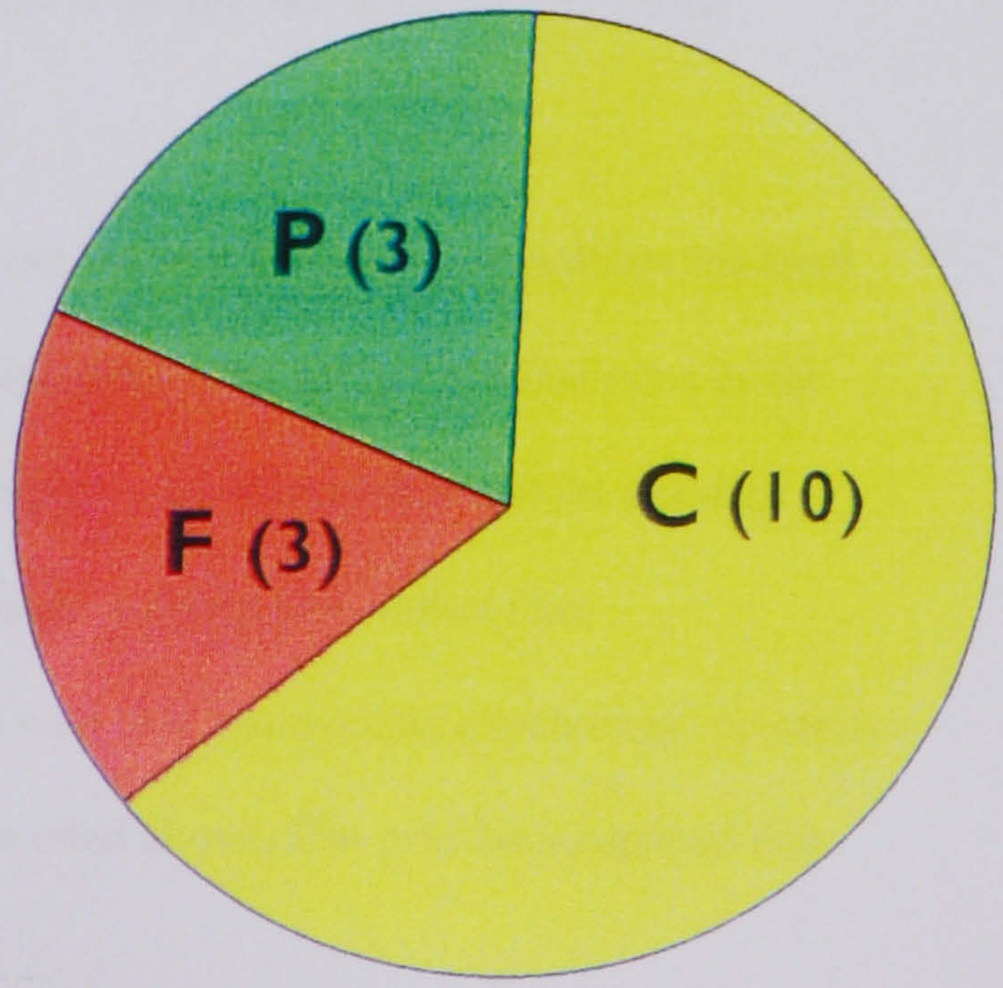


Fig N **Work Pattern and Contract**

P = Substantial part-time
Nancy, Trish, and Heather.

F = Fulltime - Lynn, (Jane),
Liz (not all in counselling).

C = Casual basis - Alexia, Morag
Sonya, Dora Grace, Andy, James,
Paul, Clare and Donald.



The Strong Interest Inventory

All participants completed the Strong Interest Inventory, (discussed in Chapter Six.) A brief summary of the findings from participants is displayed below in Table D. The Strong Interest Inventory (Harmon, et al, 1994) comprises a series of 'rating scale' questions about occupational choices, academic disciplines, preferences for leisure and other activities and then offers a description of interests and suggestions for future planning around work and leisure. It is a somewhat general and impersonal inventory, but it has been 'standardised' across a range of populations in terms of social class, gender, age and racial grouping (Fouad, et al, 1994, Hansen, 1993).

These kinds of standardised, commercially produced surveys are easy to administer and most of the participants found the inventory fun to complete and were pleased to receive their profile. For Paul, for instance, the profile bore out his own belief that he should have been a lawyer. For Dora, who had recently talked of purchasing an area of natural woodland in which to be buried, there was much amusement at the suggestion she would be suitable for a career in undertaking. Most of the descriptions seemed fairly congruent. The 'counselling at work' group amongst the staff enjoyed the notion that they were more enterprising and realistic than some of their colleagues and the majority heading 'artistic' associated with writers, actors and painters appealed to most of the group. As is the case with the North American findings the largest group was artistic/social. All but one of the group had strong 'artistic' leanings and the majority of people (14) had artistic traits as their 'strongest suit'. The next to largest group was artistic/investigative. According to the North American literature cited in chapter six, investigative people fair better in traditional research environments.

Our 'investigative' group included Morag, who as we can see in Part Three, had perhaps the most complex and ambivalent feelings towards such an environment. This group included none of the psychologists, but did also include the two natural scientists, who presumably had the greatest investigative experience. All four in the group were artistic/investigative, rather than investigative/realistic, the group most likely to respond well to a 'mainstream psychology' research environment according to the North American literature cited above. The profiles suggested that

this group liked independent work environments, using creativity to analyse ideas and being appreciated for their intuition and idealism, all of which received a favourable and affirmative response.

The largest group were the artistic/social interest types and, also bearing out the North American research (see Kahn & Scott, 1997) they were all women, whereas the artistic /investigative group had the highest concentration of men. Betz (1997) and Bowman (1997) suggested that research climates needed to be altered to accommodate these kinds of people. In the counselling programme at the University of Bristol we did not yet have a research climate.

Artistic/ Social	*Artistic/ Investigative*	*Artistic/ Enterprising*	*Artistic/ Realistic*	*Conventional/ Artistic*	*Enterprising/ Realistic*
(Jane)	Trish	Liz	Dora	Clare	James
Lynn	Morag	Nancy	Sonya		
Alexia	Andy	Donald			
Heather	Paul				
Grace					
5	4	3	2	1	1

Table D: Strong Interest inventory results for the University of Bristol.

Local dimensions

As a preamble to each research conversation that took place within this project I had a brief preliminary discussion with each participant, in which I explained the fluid and evolving nature of the study, obtained permissions about 'ongoing informed consent' and asked some specific questions that emerged from the survey described in Appendix Two. These conversations elicited the information displayed in figs O, P, Q and R. Fig. O shows that the group was evenly divided in perceiving itself as 'up to date' or 'out of date' as far as the literature and research in the counselling field was concerned. A comparison of Fig. O with Table E that illustrates the different 'counselling generations' within the participant group also shows that describing yourself as 'up to

date' or 'out of date' did not have any correlation with generational issues. Both 'up to date' and 'out of date' groups were evenly distributed amongst pioneers, new generation members and those trained in universities and elsewhere. There were no obvious threads so far to link those with out-of –date identity claims, although in some cases these were clearly 'preferred claims' in White's (2000a) terms and were stepped into with some determination. To quote Trish's subsequent conversation:

> *'The BAC Journal arrives, I don't know how often it arrives and it sits there in it's plastic wrapper gathering dust. There are times when I get as far as taking that plastic wrapper off and skimming the list of contents and think gosh that sounds interesting but I would guarantee I wouldn't... in the last years worth I've probably read one article.'*

Or Donald's observations:

> *'Up to datedness, of course, is all the rage these days, knowing what is top of the counselling pops, that sort of thing. There is undoubtedly a great deal written, but is there much said?'*

Fig. Q illustrates answers to questions about preferred ways of coming across research information and, unusually perhaps for a group of university-based educators, the majority not only preferred books to journals but preferred buying books to spending time in libraries. A small group had a preference for not reading the literature of counselling at all, either because outside their role at the university, they were more involved in other spheres of influence, such as management consultancy, or because they found fiction, biography and poetry more sustaining of their work as therapists. Paul was very clear on this:

'when I do want to read, want to be informed about my practice, I find myself turning to literature, to plays, to plots and stories that I remember coming across in novels. That's the kind of literature that lodges itself in the crevices of my brain...not the complete works of Windy Dryden'

Fig O **FEELING UP TO DATE WITH LITERATURE / RESEARCH**

Up-to-date
Alexia, Nancy Sonya, Dora, James, Liz, Grace (Jane).

Out-of-date
Morag, Heather, Lynn, Trish Andy, Paul Clare and Donald

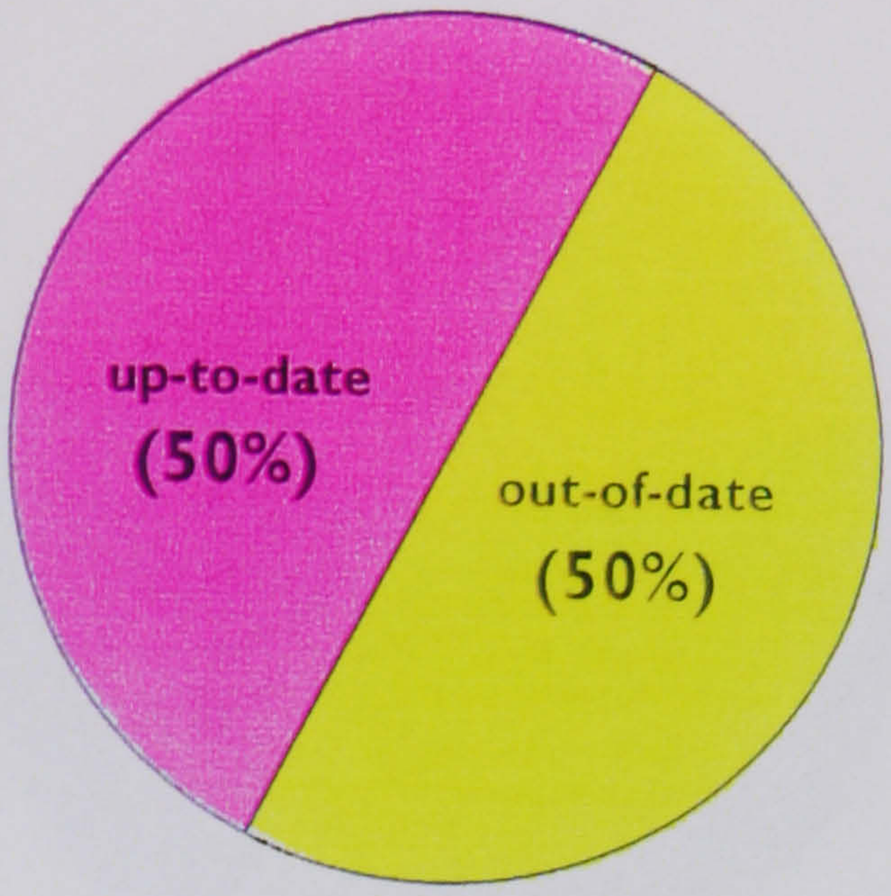


Fig P **PREVIOUS UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE / QUALIFICATIONS**

N = no contact prior to Bristol counselling programme
Nancy, James, Paul, Donald and Alexia.

S = Some experience (eg: first degree) prior to
Morag, Sonya, Grace, Andy and Clare.

C = Considerable experience / several qualifications (previous work, etc)
Lynn, Heather, (Jane) Trish, Dora and Liz.

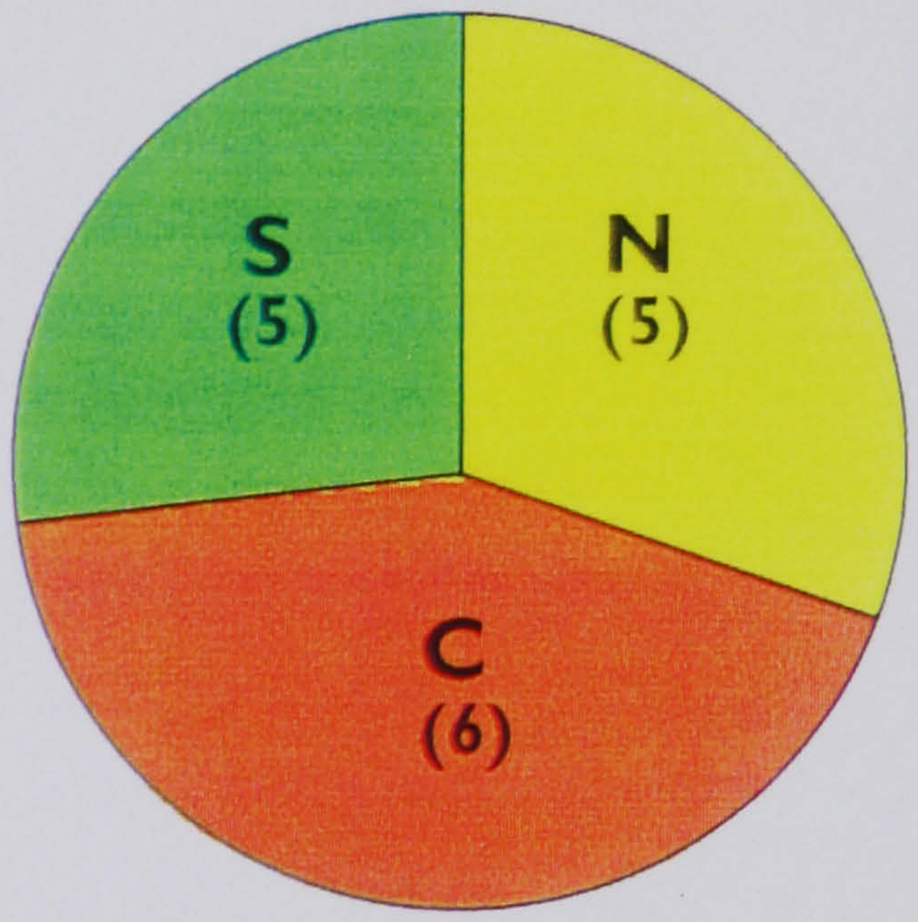


Fig Q **LITERATURE, READING MATERIALS PREFERRED**

O = Preference for not reading literature of counselling - management literature - related literature or novels.
James, Paul, Trish and Donald.
(NB: if they were going to the literature of counselling it would be a **book** not a **journal**).

B = Preference for reading / buying books rather than spending time in libraries or money on journals. Alexia, Morag, Lynn, Dora, Grace, Clare and Andy.

BJ = Equal preference for books and journals.
Heather, Nancy, Sonya, Liz and (Jane).

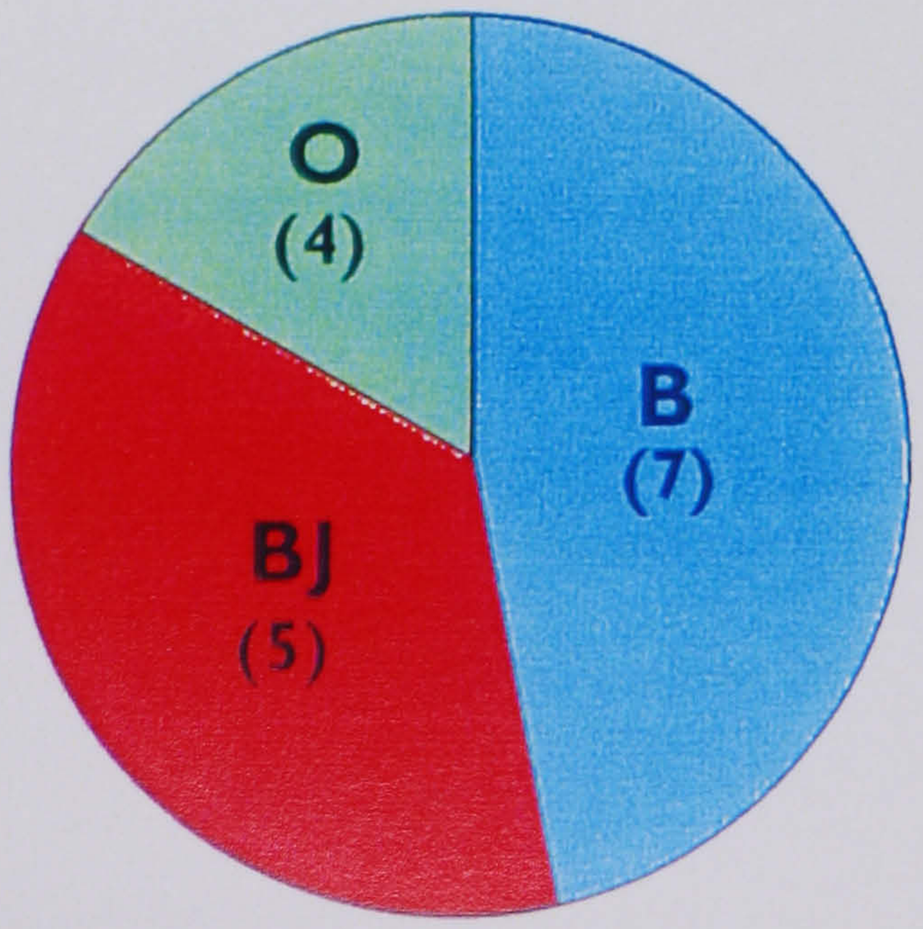


Fig R **EXTERNAL LIFE CHOICES AND PREFERENCES**

B = need to feel they belong more. Aleixa, Morag and Sonya.

C = need to spend time, or not lose the time they had being creative and being out in nature. Lynn, Dora, Grace and Heather.

F = need to spend time or more time with partners, children and grandchildren. Nancy, Trish, Paul James (Jane) and Clare.

T = need, or want to spend more time, or time by themselves / have leisure time. Andy, Donald and Liz.

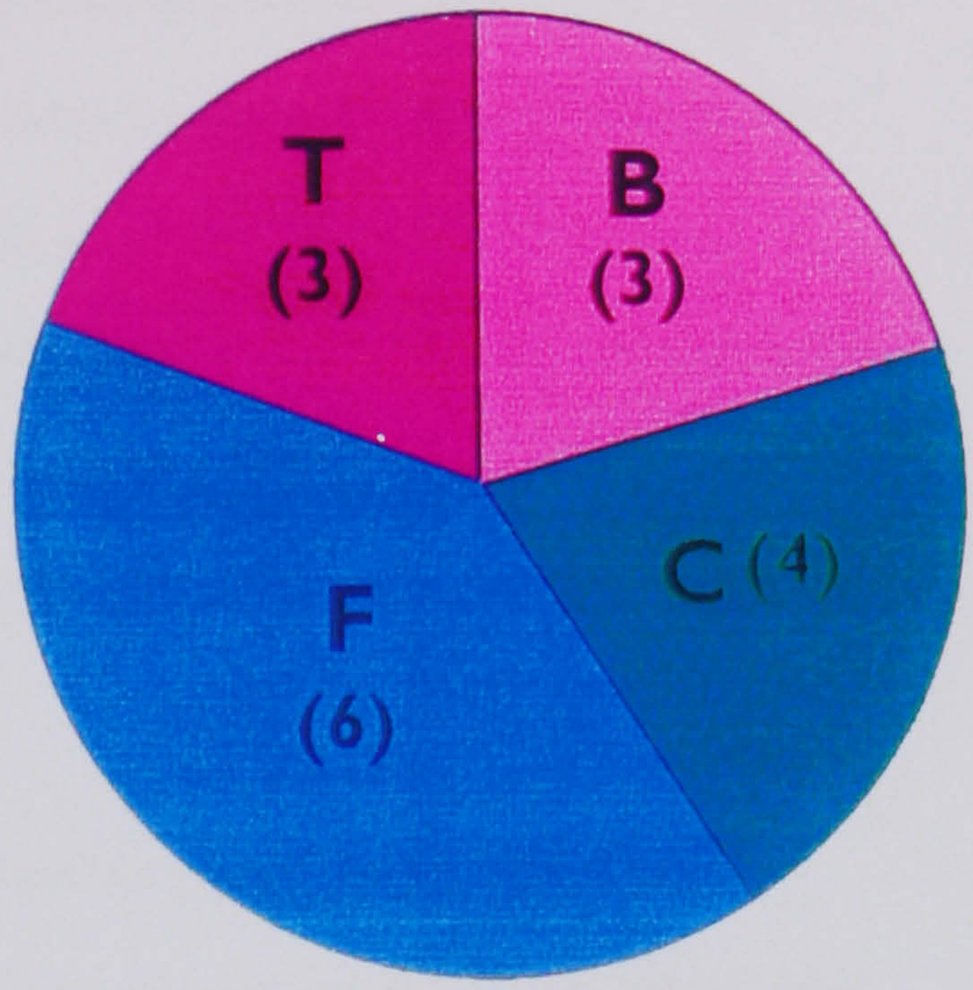


Fig. P. tells us that the group was fairly evenly divided between those with no previous experience of universities before becoming involved with the Bristol programme (5), those who had some experience of university life and qualifications (5) and a slightly bigger group of those with considerable involvement with or university-based qualifications (6). It is unusual for one third of the membership of a university staff group to be new to the culture of the academy. This perhaps reflects the relative newness of counselling as a profession.

Preferred Life Stories

I found answers to questions, about preferred life choices intriguing (Fig, R.). In answer to questions about what they would prefer to be doing if they were not engaged in research, or what they did have the inclination to do in the case of participants who had expressed a disinclination to do research, the majority (6), this time including two men, said that they would prefer to spend this time not at work, but with their families, partners and children. Four people preferred to spend their time being creative and being out in nature, three preferred leisure time and/or more time to themselves and another three said they felt they would need to 'belong' more to the university environment and culture, before they could see themselves getting involved in any research agendas. Personal and contractual issues of belonging were to feature in greater depth in Part Three of the study.

The life choices people were making about self care, reminiscent of John's (1996) comments in her book on personal development in counselling training about choices to be work rich and time poor or time rich and work poor, perhaps highlight some different cultural and social practices amongst the counselling profession, compared with some of their colleagues in academic settings.

Many of the people working on the University of Bristol counselling programmes have chosen not to work full-time. These are not, in the main, women returners being supported by full-time working partners. This group includes both women and men making non-traditional work choices. Of the thirteen people who are employed on a part-time basis at the university, only five were engaged in full-time equivalent employment. The majority were choosing different 'downsized' lifestyles. They were making choices less dominated by the 'protestant work ethic' and certainly making decisions that were less economically rewarding than their full-time academic colleagues.

The counselling programme staff share a university profile with other applied professionals such as teachers and social workers, of entering university life at a much later stage, often taking a cut in salary to do so (Acker, 2001). This was certainly the case with both Lynn and myself, the two managers of the programme, both of whom 'dropped out' of senior management positions, commanding higher salaries, to enter the university. This age and life space profile has considerable implications for the development of a research base within a university context. Externally funded University research projects are often staffed by young, poorly paid contract researchers, often women, who are driven by a strong desire to gain full-time employment within the academy and are consequently prepared to suffer quite frugal conditions of service (see: Fisher, 1994, Brooks, 1997, Henkel, 2000, for an exposition of this tendency). These practices are unlikely to sit well with the group of practitioner/educators who are at the life stage and making the life choices described above. As Trish pointed out:

> *'I've seen how this place works; I've done my stint as a research assistant in anatomy. I have no desire whatsoever to work on some other bugger's project for a pittance. I don't honestly think if we go down that road in counselling we are going to get very far...'*

Alternative Identity claims

Tables G and H also give interesting insights. It was quite clear at the outset of the study that none of the co-researchers saw their primary professional identity as that of researcher. Most of my colleagues preferred to see themselves as practitioners, with the next biggest group, which included myself, identifying themselves as educators. The three core 'counselling at work' staff saw themselves more as real worlders, out in 'real' organisations (as opposed, to quote James, to 'Ivory Towers'). The last group, Morag, Donald and Sonya, saw themselves primarily as a gardener, a facilitator and a misfit, respectively. This determination not to fit was quite strong with the group evenly dividing their most significant subsidiary identity claims between outsiders/mavericks and part-timers/pragmatists, only four people (including myself) were comfortable with a subsidiary identity as a researcher.

Positioning in relation to counselling, to the University of Bristol and research matters

Some of the preliminary questions I asked my colleagues had the intended outcome of placing them within the context of their relationships with the world of counselling and the University of Bristol. Tables E, F, and J illustrate some of the outcomes of those conversations. As has been alluded to already in this study, counselling in Britain developed initially within agencies, from a somewhat 'barefoot' volunteer base, later developed separate trainings, some of them initially fairly experimental and has only recently become engaged with the processes of becoming a profession and establishing a presence in a wide range of university settings (see: Connor, 1994, Dryden, et al, 1995, and McLeod, 1998, pp359-375 for more detailed accounts of this process).

Table E shows the range of generations represented within the University of Bristol staff group in terms of their training history and culture. The group were fairly evenly distributed across the 'generations' of counselling trainings, five being agency trained, six, including myself having trained at one of the early pioneer trainings and another five having undertaken their initial training much later at the University of Bristol itself. Table F indicates that two of the group, Nancy and Liz, are completely home grown, having completed both their initial training and a master's degree at Bristol. In all, five people completed their initial training at Bristol, and another five attended the M.Sc courses at Bristol. The remaining six received all their training and higher education elsewhere. Turning to Table J, we can see that only four of the group had no research experience at all beyond their initial counsellor training, whereas four had experience of undergoing traditional experimental research trainings and the remaining eight had some experience or training in counselling research, such as conducting agency-based research, or undertaking a masters in counselling or, in one case, a doctoral degree. Given the diverse origins of this group, it seems likely that multifarious and divergent understandings of 'research' would emerge from our subsequent conversations.

Table E
Counselling Generations

GROUP 1 agency - trained	GROUP 2 early pioneer training	GROUP 3 new generation (this university)
Donald James Dora Trish Grace	Morag Lynn Heather Alexia Paul (Jane)	Andy Sonya Liz Nancy Clare

Table F
Educational experience and training

Counselling training and / or higher education elsewhere	Counselling training at Bristol	Counselling training and MSc in S & T at Bristol	MSc in S & T at Bristol
Morag Lynn Grace Dora Donald Trish	Clare Nancy Sonya Liz Andy	Liz Nancy	Heather Paul James (Jane) Alexia

S & T = Counselling Supervision and training

Table G
Primary or preferred professional identity at the outset of this study

GROUP 1 Educators	GROUP 2 Practitioners	GROUP 3 Real Worlders	GROUP 4 other
Heather Lynn (Jane) Dora	Alexia Trish Grace Andy Paul Nancy	James Liz Clare	Donald Sonya Morag

Table H

Significant subsidiary, personal / professional identity expressed at the outset of the study.

GROUP 1 Researchers	GROUP 2 Outsiders / Mavericks	GROUP 3 Part-Timers - pragmatists
Nancy Paul James (Jane)	Donald Morag Alexia Sonya Lynn Heather	Paul Andy Dora Grace Trish Clare

Table J

Research experience and Training

GROUP 1 Traditional Research experience or training (only)	GROUP 2 Some Counselling Research experience / training (eg: MSc or equivalent)	GROUP 3 No Research experience / training (beyond initial counsellor training)
Trish Dora Andy Clare	Alexia Lynn Paul Liz Heather Nancy James (Jane)	Morag Sonya Grace Donald

Notes on Research group Connectedness

The large number of people who have done some kind of training at the University of Bristol (10) indicates a large number of past trainer / trainee relationships. (Dora, Lynn, Nancy, Heather and myself have also worked substantially on the MSc programmes as trainers, for instance).

As principal researcher in this team I have been a colleague in Diploma team A (together with Lynn, Donald, Trish and Dora); Diploma Team D (together with Heather, James, Liz and Clare), and in the MSc programme with Heather, Nancy and Lynn.

Clare, Sonya, Liz, James and Alexia have all been students on my courses at various points and Paul, Nancy, Heather and myself were peers on the first MSc in Counselling (Supervision and Training).

Re-searching amongst ourselves.

This brief history of training experience alone gives some indication of the interrelationships and interconnections between the staff group at the University of Bristol. This is perhaps not surprising as the University's programme is much the largest provider of counsellor education in the south west of Britain. The notes underneath Table J illustrate the number and variety of workplace relationships that the staff group have had with each other over time. Notably, several of the research group had been my own students and three had been my peers when I had completed the University's first master's programme.

The genogram overleaf, (a tool borrowed from family therapy and a cousin of the sociogram that has recently been put to a number of differently focussed and organisational uses (see: Papadopoulos, et al., 1997, Koehly and Shivy, 1998, and DeMaria, et al., 1999), illustrates just one aspect of this existing web of relationships. The outer edges of the organisational genogram in this appendix are indicative of the current workplace and systemic relationships (according to teaching programme staff groupings). The criss-crossed orange web illustrates the multiplicity of relationships outside the university including past and present working commitments and well-established friendships.

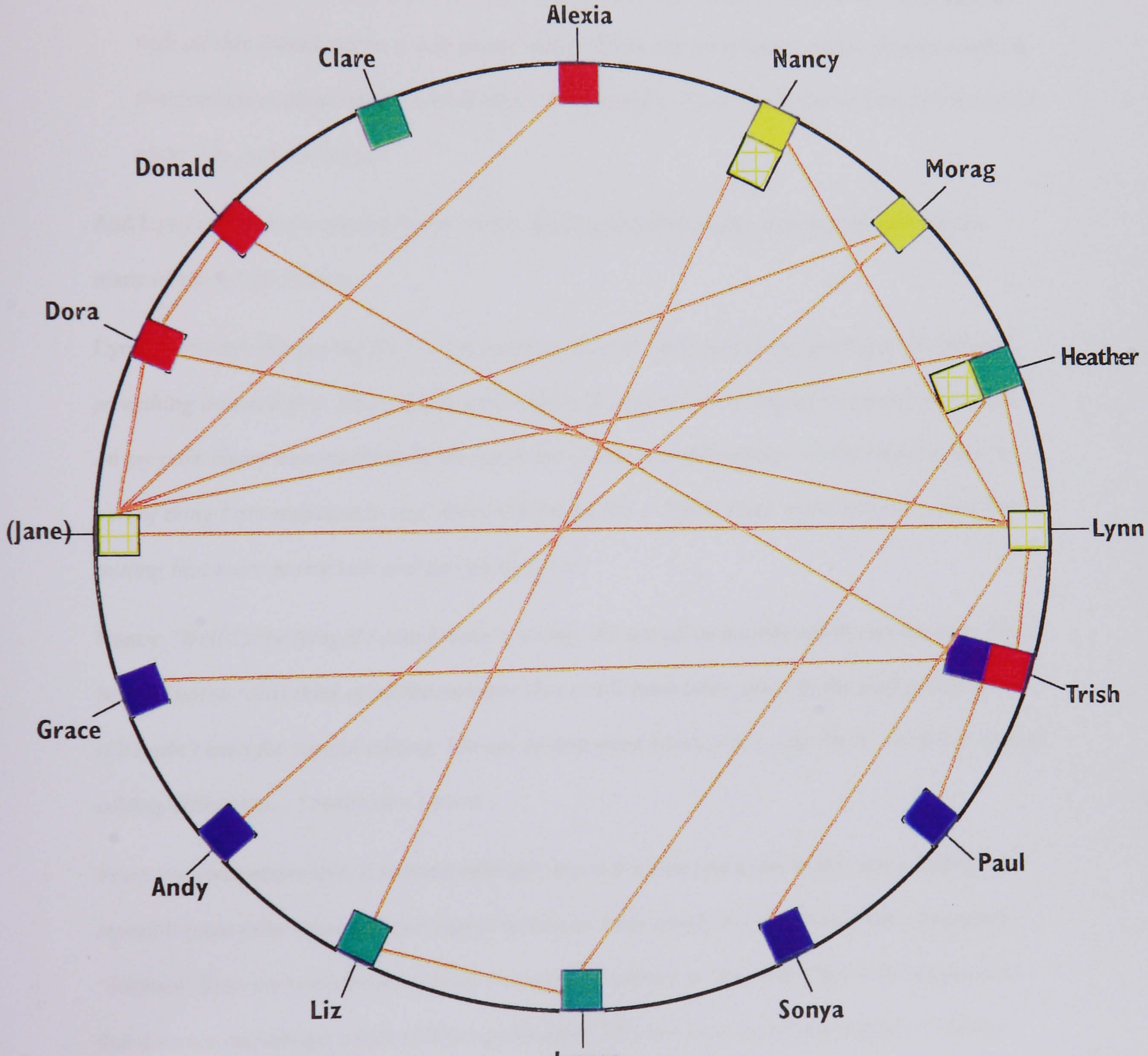
This brings up again the ethical dimension of someone like myself, so integrally involved in the organisation she is researching, and at the same time attempting to acquire a higher degree. The potential exploitation and complication of relationships, in order for one person to obtain a higher degree has been discussed within different contexts by Grafanaki (1996) and Etherington (1996) and was alluded to in Chapter Four. Given all the complex dual relationships outlined above, why would I knowingly complicate this situation further?

My justification for undertaking this study was outlined to some extent in Part One, but continues to be present as an ongoing dimension of the ethical decision-making throughout this research process. It was clear that my co-researchers did not, given the complexity of existing circumstances, regard participation in this research project as a significantly greater 'imposition' than any other dimension of our workplace connections.

Organisational Genogram
Significant current and past relationships

The core staff group have been through many previous relationships and configurations with each other during the history of the Counselling Programme (see notes under table H).

The genogram shows **current** work team connections, together with any current or past connections outside the university (eg: previous clients / friends or supervisers or current colleagues elsewhere).



Diploma Team A	Diploma Team D Counselling at Work	(Jane and Lynn, as full-time managers, have worked with almost everbody in the group and between them, been in every team at one time)
Diploma Team B	MSc Programme Team	
Diploma Team C	Significant relationship (current or past) outside the university setting	

Morag articulated this very clearly:

> *'I already have, and have had, a number of different connections with you. We both trained at Southwest London College at different times and know many of the same people. We met and became friends through SCATS. We have mutual friends now. I worked 'for' you on the certificate and although we've never worked together, we both work with Nancy. This is just another different relationship with you. I'm fine with that. I assume we are used to juggling with all this. I think we do it well on the whole. There is a lot of angst, rather precious talk, in this profession about 'dual relationships'. Well, frankly, if you can't ride at least two horses at once, why join the circus?'*

And Lynn and Nancy expressed some of the ongoing ethical decision-making that went on for many of the co-researchers:

Lynn: *'although this is your Ph.D., I'm aware we are all interested in you getting it. We all have something invested in it. My only concern is not to let that get in the way of openness and clarity on my part. Every now and then in the interview I found myself thinking...is this okay? Is this the sort of thing I am supposed to say? Does this sound like a 'Ph.D. level' conversation?...and then putting that voice to one side and just going for it!'*

Nancy: *'Well I'd be lying if I said I wasn't editing. We are all constantly editing all the time. We'd be mad not to. Just think of all the murders that would have taken place in the staff group by now if it hadn't been for careful editing. I'm not editing more because it's your Ph.D., but I may well be editing differently... I really don't know'.*

From my own perspective, it seemed infinitely less rewarding and considerably more 'hassle' to research some other issue or these issues with some other group. As has already been discussed, 'distance' from my participants was not a construct pertinent to this study. Nor is the assumption that distance encourages a lack of bias uncontested. This has been forcefully argued by Oakley (1981), Ellis & Flaherty (1992), Ellis, (1994, p301-341) and Grossman, et al., (1999) amongst others.

This study is a necessarily biased and intimate account. The genogram above is indicative of the very 'messy slate' that my co-participants and I started with. The extent to which we were successful in 'making the familiar unfamiliar' (Myerhoff, 1980, 1-12), in conducting this

archaeological dig into our own archives, will largely be judged by our readers. For my part, as principal researcher and writer, I can only continue to present these stories and the ethical and pragmatic dimensions that underpin them with as much transparency as I can muster.